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THE GENESIS OF THE WAR

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
HERBERT HENRY ASQUITH

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111

THE GENESIS OF THE WAR

by

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
HERBERT HENRY ASQUITH
PRIME MINISTER OF ENGLAND 1908-1916

NEW YORK
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PREFACE

This book is in no sense an autobiography. Nor does it include within its scope a review of the conduct of the War, of the Armistice, or of the Peace negotiations, and the Treaties which resulted from them. Its purpose is to trace the genesis of the war through all the antecedent stages up to its actual outbreak, with especial references to the policy pursued by Great Britain, for which during the nine preceding years I had myself a large measure of responsibility. The recent publication by the ex-Kaiser of his Memoirs seemed to make this an opportune moment for attempting such a task.

Though I have made use of all the relevant and authentic materials which are now accessible, and been careful to rectify statements of fact, I have been as sparing as was possible in references and foot-notes. An exhaustive analysis of the documentary matter which has been brought to light since the War is to be found in Mr. G. P. Gooch's "Recent Revelations on European Diplomacy." *

* *Journal of British Institute of International Affairs*, Jan., 1923.

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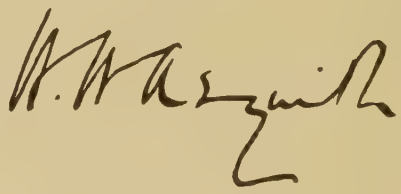
PREFACE

I have to acknowledge many obligations for kind assistance in my undertaking. I am particularly indebted to Mr. Alexander MacKintosh (of the *Aberdeen Journal*) for the pains and skill which he has expended in disentangling the story of the negotiations immediately preceding the War.

Among others to whom I owe my best thanks are Sir William Tyrrell, Assistant Under-Secretary, and Mr. Headlam Morley, historical adviser to the Foreign Office; Sir J. E. Masterton Smith, Under-Secretary for the Colonies; Lieutenant Colonel Sir Maurice Hankey; Mr. Montague Norman, the Governor of the Bank of England; Dr. Walter Leaf, Chairman of the Westminster Bank; Mr. W. M. R. Pringle, M.P.; Major General Sir Frederick Maurice; and my old colleagues Lord Haldane and Mr. Churchill.



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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

THE object of this book is to trace the Great War to its real origins, and to set out in due perspective causes and their consequences.

The materials for such a survey are by this time abundant and adequate. The contemporary documents, which are the best evidence, have now become public property. M. Poincaré, President of the French Republic throughout the War, has published his book, "Les Origines de la Guerre." The statesmen who were directly or ostensibly responsible for German policy, the two Chancellors, Price von Bülow and Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg, have given their confessions and vindications to the world. And we have lastly (November,

1922) in "My Memoirs 1878-1918," by the Ex-Kaiser William II, the personal apologia of the principal actor.

Shortly before his death (1898) Bismarck is reported to have said to Ballin, who was showing him over the Hamburg-Amerika Liner which was to bear his name: "I shall not see the World War, but you will; and it will start in the Near East." The great Chancellor saw that the forces which make for war were already at work, and (whether by prescience or good luck) he predicted the quarter of the horizon which would let them loose.

I am particularly concerned to set out the purposes and methods of British policy during the 10 years which preceded the War. When the Liberal Government of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman came into power in December, 1905, there were on the continent of Europe two groups of Allies; the Triple Alliance which dated from 1882; and the Franco-Russian Alliance which dated from 1893. Great Britain had no part in either combination. She had recently established an understanding with France, which, beginning with the friendly settlement of long out-standing differences between the two countries, developed in cordiality

and intimacy as the years went on. But it was not and never became an Alliance.

I myself was a responsible Minister of the British Crown, first under King Edward VII and then under King George V, for eleven consecutive years (December 1905-December 1916): for the first two of those years as Chancellor of the Exchequer, and for the remaining nine as Prime Minister, and head of the Government. Throughout I had as my colleague at the Foreign Office, Sir Edward Grey.

Between him and myself there was daily intimacy and unbroken confidence. I can hardly recall any occasion on which we had a difference of opinion which lasted for more than half an hour. This was not because we were specially bound together by the common profession of an esoteric creed (sometimes called "Liberal Imperialism") which was not shared by all or even the majority of our colleagues. Important questions of foreign policy were always laid before the cabinet, where they were open to the fullest investigation and discussion before final and binding decisions were taken. In particular, the various written agreements and "formulæ" which, as will appear from

my narrative, were from time to time exchanged between ourselves and other Powers were the subject of close debate and of almost meticulous scrutiny. The formula contained in the correspondence between Sir E. Grey and M. Cambon in November, 1912, which defines the mutual obligations imposed upon France and ourselves by the Entente, was canvassed and sifted by the Cabinet, word by word. I do not of course suggest that during all these years there was always complete unanimity among us. It is sufficient to say that, until our final decision to go to war in August, 1914, no Cabinet Minister resigned his office upon any question of foreign policy.

I will add that after a long experience I am satisfied that Cabinet Government (in the established sense of the term) is the best instrument that has yet been devised for the daily conduct of national affairs. The Cabinet might well be somewhat reduced in numbers, though in practice I have rarely experienced any inconvenience from its size. During the War, on one of our periodical visits to Paris, I had the honour with three or four of my colleagues of being invited to attend a meeting of the French Cabinet at the Elysée. My recollec-

tion is that the number of members (who at that time included four, if not five, ex-Prime Ministers) was much the same as our own, and, except that the chair was occupied, not by the Prime Minister, but by the President of the Republic, the character and method of the proceedings reminded me very much of what goes on in Downing Street.

It is (or was) an exceptional thing in the British Cabinet to take a division. It is left to the Prime Minister to collect and interpret the general sense of his colleagues.*

The value of the Cabinet system is often conspicuously illustrated in the sphere of Foreign Policy. The heavy and always increasing pressure of departmental duties makes it impossible for the majority of Ministers to follow from the study of telegrams and despatches the vast variety of complicated matters which are being handled day by day at the Foreign Office. By frequent meetings of the Cabinet, they are able to keep in touch with all the developments of our external relations, and

* I remember in Mr. Gladstone's cabinet of 1892-94, which contained a number of excellent scholars, a division being suggested—I think by Lord Rosebery—on the correctness of a quotation from Juvenal, which was keenly disputed between the Prime Minister and Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. The matter was happily settled by the production of the text: Sir Henry proved to be right.

when they number men (as was happily the case in my Government) of acute political insight and wide experience their questions and criticisms are often of incredible service.

A question has been raised, with which I ought to deal briefly on the threshold of my task, as to the extent of the obligations of secrecy which law or usage impose upon those who have been in the service of the Crown and particularly in its inner councils. Eminent foreign writers, who have held the highest positions in their respective countries, have, in books published since the War, made free use of communications, both documentary and oral, which originally passed under the seal of confidence. Instances can be found in the works to which I have already referred of the two German Chancellors, of M. Poincaré, and of the Kaiser himself. Such communications are often the best, and sometimes the sole authentic, materials for history. The only satisfactory test that I can suggest as to whether or not it is right to publish them in after years, is to ask whether it can be done without any possible injury to any now existing public interest. Besides the question of strict right there is also that of propriety and good taste. And here it

is obvious that lapse of time, change of circumstances, the vindication of the dead, the right and often the duty of repelling false charges and disposing of misrepresentation, are material considerations.

This book, apart from incidental allusions, is concerned almost entirely with events the latest of which happened nearly nine years ago. So far as it discloses documents or discussions which were at one time confidential, I am satisfied that such disclosures are confined to matters the publication of which can now be of no detriment to the State. I have especially in mind the references which I have made to the proceedings of the Committee of Imperial Defence between 1905 and 1914. It would, in my judgment, be a good thing and could do no possible harm, if the minutes of the Committee between those dates were published to the world without abridgment or omission. They are vital to a proper understanding of our pre-war preparations. I may add that I have been scrupulously niggardly in imparting information as to proceedings in the Cabinet.

Before I proceed with the narrative which is developed in the following chapters, I will by way

of introduction cite some passages from the speech which I made at the Guildhall banquet on the 9th November, 1908—a few months after I had become Prime Minister. They had been eventful months in the East of Europe. In July, the Revolution at Constantinople had put an end to the rule of the Kaiser's friend Abdul Hamid; the Young Turks were installing themselves in his place; and hopes were widely entertained in Liberal Europe that we had come to the opening of a new and better chapter in the annals of Ottoman rule. There followed in October the declaration by Prince Ferdinand of the independence of Bulgaria, and the annexation by Austria of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was in these circumstances that I spoke on the 9th November.

"I do not wish it to be supposed that we desire to see Europe divided into two separate groups in connection with the new situation in the Near East. We have found ourselves in complete sympathy with France, who is the ally of Russia; but at the same time we, and I believe other Powers also, have been equally frank in our communications with Germany and Italy, who are the allies of Austria; because we recognise that the common object of

Europe ought to be to overcome the difficulties which have already arisen without creating new difficulties, and that this can only be done by a policy which springs from general consent. Diplomatic victories may be too dearly bought. One Power's success may be so achieved as to involve another's disappointment and discomfiture; and thereby the very kind of friction is engendered which it should be the aim of a wise diplomacy to avoid. We, at any rate, have taken up in Near Eastern affairs an entirely disinterested attitude. We ask nothing for ourselves; we do not seek to take advantage of the situation for any purposes of our own. Our sole objects are these: to maintain the public law of Europe; to secure for the new *régime* in Turkey just treatment and a fair chance; and to promote such an adjustment of the varied interests and susceptibilities which are involved as will prevent a disturbance of the peace and open the road to freedom and good government. . . .

"A variety of circumstances has recently caused the relations between Great Britain and Germany to become a subject of active public discussion. It is almost exactly a year since the German Emperor was the guest of your predecessor, in this very hall.

Some of us, and I was one, who were present on that occasion, cannot forget his Majesty's emphatic and impressive declaration that the governing purpose of his policy was the preservation of the peace of Europe and the maintenance of good relations between our two countries. It is in the spirit of that declaration, the spirit which aims not only at peace but at goodwill, that we desire to deal with other nations, with Germany not less than others. It is that spirit which has guided and which will guide us in all negotiations, actual and prospective, regarding the present difficulties in European politics. And if, as I trust and believe is the case, the other Powers cherish the same desire and intention, then the clouds, which for the moment darken the sky, whether they have originated in the Balkans or elsewhere, will disperse without a storm; peace will be assured; existing friendships will be maintained unimpaired, and it is not too much to hope that the atmosphere all around will be cleared of the vapours of suspicion and mistrust. May I submit to you and to others outside and beyond those walls, that there should be no talk at such a time of isolation, of hostile groupings, of rival combinations among the Powers; those Powers who are the

joint trustees of civilisation, and of its greatest and paramount safeguard—the peace of the world! Nothing will induce us in this country to falter and fall short in any one of the special engagements which we have undertaken, to be disloyal or unfaithful even for a moment to the spirit of any existing friendship. In that I feel sure I speak the determined and unalterable mind of the whole country; but it is equally true of the temper of the Government and of the nation to say, that we have neither animosities to gratify, nor selfish interests to advance, and that we shall not be reluctant to grasp any hand that is extended to us in goodwill and in good faith."

I have quoted this speech at length, made as it was in the early days of my own Government, because I believe it lays down with clearness and accuracy the lines consistently followed by British statesmen from 1904 to 1914.

CHAPTER II

THE EARLY YEARS. 1888-1900

THE era of Weltpolitik did not effectively begin until the Chancellorship of Prince Bülow in 1900. But it is necessary to a full comprehension of its origin and meaning, to pass in brief review some episodes in the administrations of his predecessors which bear on the relations between Great Britain and Germany.

Ab Jove principium. It was Bismarck who created the German Empire, and left it intact and to all appearance impregnable. The last of the Hohenzollern sovereigns now surveys in exile the ruins of the handiwork of the greatest servant of his dynasty. Of the strategy of the political chessboard Bismarck was probably the most consummate master in history. The triumphant success of his "objective idealism" had a lasting effect on German thought and character, which, though he would never have tolerated the insane policy which led to

the War, nevertheless entitles him to a place in the pedigree of its authors.

It must, indeed, be admitted that he was fortunate in the opportunities given him by the ineptitude of his principal victims, both in diplomacy and war. The first was Austria, in whose statesmanship stupidity had become an inveterate tradition. The next was the Second Empire in France, where after the death of Morny, the head and brains of the group of adventurers who put Napoleon III on his throne, the reins of policy were constantly slipping through the limp and listless hands of a decrepit dreamer.

Bismarck was content to leave England in her "splendid isolation," with an occasional "deal" over some outlying portion of the globe. The real pivot of his post-war policy was a friendly Russia, with whom, behind the back of his Austrian Ally, he concluded in 1884 the secret Reinsurance Treaty; and here in the end he failed. He was never really forgiven for allowing the fruits of Russia's victorious campaign against Turkey in 1877 to be snatched from her grasp; or for the "honest brokerage" which gave precedence to Austrian and British over Russian interests at the Congress of Berlin. It

was the first step on the road which led to the Franco-Russian Entente. But from time to time he continued to make friendly overtures to St. Petersburg. The Kaiser tells us that in 1886, while still Prince William, he himself was sent to Russia by his grandfather and Prince Bismarck on a conciliatory mission, with "direct instructions to offer Constantinople and the Dardanelles." The Czar (Alexander III) tartly replied: "If I wish to have Constantinople I shall take it whenever I feel like it, without need of the permission or approval of P. Bismarck."

Bismarck had no pro-Turkish leanings. Nor did he look with any favour on the early stages (the only one which he lived to see) of the "Big Navy" propaganda. He realized that Germany had quite a heavy enough weight to carry without the additional burden of a policy of naval aggrandisement. What Lamprecht happily calls "telluric Germanisation" was a post-Bismarckian product.

On the death in 1888 of Frederick III, after a reign of only 99 days, it became merely a question of time when a breach would occur between Prince Bismarck, who monopolised the whole machinery of government, and dragooned all the so-called

ministers, and the young Kaiser—restless and self-confident; sentimental and adventurous; and penetrated to the core of his being with an overpowering consciousness of the Heaven-sent mission of the Hohenzollern family. There could be no real co-operation between two such incompatible personalities; and as the one was old and technically a servant, and the other was young and technically the master, the retirement or dismissal of the Prince was inevitable. As the Czar said to the Kaiser, at the Narva manœuvres in 1890, in the crude dialect which autocrats apparently use in familiar converse: "Je comprends parfaitement ta ligne d'action: le Prince, avec toute sa grandeur, n'était après tout d'autre que ton employé ou fonctionaire."

So the *employé* to whom the Kaiser owed his imperial Crown and Germany her political unity, had to go.

Caprivi (1890-1894)

It was quite certain that whoever was chosen to succeed to Prince Bismarck's office would have an unhappy time, for the Prince was in his most rancorous mood, and commanded the servile obe-

dience of a horde of satellites both in the press and in the public service. The man actually selected by the Kaiser for the unenviable post was Caprivi, a war-worn Prussian general, whom he had displaced from the headship of the Admiralty, and who was, so far as politics were concerned, a novice and a nonentity.

He was a cipher chancellor; the most important European event which happened during his time was the defensive Alliance concluded between France and Russia (1893).

Hohenlohe (1894-1900)

From the seclusion of Freidrichsruh the formidable and menacing figure of Bismarck still dominated German opinion, and paralysed the Kaiser. It was largely (as he confesses) in the hope of appeasing this all-powerful and relentless critic that he entrusted the post of Chancellor to Prince Hohenlohe, the Governor of Alsace-Lorraine. The Prince was already 75 years of age, and he was not a Prussian. But the sacred ichor of German royalty flowed in his veins; and Bismarck was deeply in his debt for his successful efforts to bring

in Bavaria on the side of Prussia in the War of 1870. He held the office for six years, and his personality left little or no permanent impression on German policy.

It was during Prince Hohenlohe's term of office that the once famous "Kruger Telegram" was despatched after the Jameson Raid in January, 1896. The Kaiser asserts that this ill-conceived and ill-timed document, which was everywhere and naturally regarded as the expression of his personal views, was extorted from him by the Secretary of State, von Marschall, with the backing of the Imperial Chancellor, and was ultimately signed by him, against his own judgment, and in spite of his repeated protests. It was one of the occasions when he remembered that he was a Constitutional Sovereign, and bound as such to defer to the counsels of his Chancellor. It would seem that the Kaiser in his account of this matter has (to say the least) underrated his personal responsibility. Sir Valentine Chirol, who was *The Times* correspondent in Berlin at the time, tells * us that he was assured by Baron von Marschall that the "Emperor had only with great difficulty been induced to al-

* In a letter to *The Times*, 14 October, 1922.

low some of the terms used in his own original draft of the telegram to be softened down at the conference, as both the Chancellor and he (Baron von Marschall) considered them to be needlessly provocative."

He seeks to excuse (as will be seen hereafter) two more of the most foolish acts of his reign—his visit to Tangier, and the despatch of the *Panther* to Agadir—on the same ground. In each case, he tells us, his objections were overruled by a short-sighted minister, and his constitutional conscience compelled him to give way. It is amusing to contrast with all this the language in which he habitually speaks of "*My* social legislation," and the creation of "*My* Navy." He also claims personal credit for the initiation and pushing forward of a grandiose policy (mainly dictated by strategic considerations) of railway and canal development, which included such enterprises as the widening of the Kaiser Wilhelm Canal, the Emden sea lock, the development of the East Prussian railway system and the scheme for a great Central Internal Canal. All this shows (he records with complacency) "how a monarch can and must influence the development of his realm by personal participa-

tion." It is only when some glaring error of policy has to be explained away, that we hear of the ultimate subordination under the Imperial Constitution of the Emperor to the Chancellor. We may be sure that he is expressing his true mind when he writes; "To think and act constitutionally is often a hard task for a ruler."

We have on the authority of Prince Bülow, who became Foreign Secretary in 1897, a perfectly frank exposition of the spirit and aims of German policy during the Hohenlohe régime. It is to be found in his book "Imperial Germany" which has a special interest for the student of history, because (unlike the Kaiser's apology) it was written before and not after the event. The first edition appeared before the War in January, 1914, and a revised edition in November, 1916, when the author still shared with many of his fellow countrymen—including the Kaiser himself—the illusion that Germany would come out victorious from the conflict.

"During the Boer War" (the quotation is from the 1914 edition), "which strained the forces of the British Empire to the uttermost, and led England into great difficulties, there seemed to be an opportunity of dealing the secret opponent of our inter-

national policy a shrewd blow. As in the rest of Europe, enthusiasm for the Boers ran high in Germany. Had the Government undertaken to put a spoke in England's wheel, it would have been sure of popular approval. To many it seemed that the European situation was favourable to a momentary success against England, and that French assistance was assured. But there was only a seeming community of interests against England in Europe, and any eventual political success against England in the Boer question would have had no real value for us. An attempt to proceed to action at the bidding of the pro-Boer feelings of that time would soon have had a sobering effect. Among the French the deeply rooted national hatred against Germany would speedily and completely have ousted the momentary ill-feeling against England as soon as we had committed ourselves to a course hostile to her interests; and a fundamental change of front in French policy would have resulted directly after. However painful the memory of the then recent events at Fashoda might be to French pride, it would not suffice to turn the scale against the memory of Sedan. The Egyptian Soudan and the White Nile had not driven the thought of Metz

and Strassburg from the hearts of the French. There was great danger that we should be thrust forward against England by France, who at the psychological moment would refuse her aid. As in Schiller's beautiful poem, 'Die Ideale' (The Ideals) our companions would have vanished midway.

"But even if, by taking action in Europe, we had succeeded in thwarting England's South African policy, our immediate national interests would not have benefited thereby. From that moment onward for many a long day our relations with England would have been poisoned. England's passive resistance to the international policy of *new* Germany would have changed to very active hostility. During these years we were occupied in founding our sea power by building the German navy, and even in the event of defeat in the South African War, it was possible for England to stifle our sea power in the embryo. Our neutral attitude during the Boer War had its origin in weighty considerations of the national interests of the German Empire.

"Our navy was not strong enough for us forcibly to achieve a sufficient sea power in the teeth of

English interests. Nor could we, by being towed in the wake of English policy, reach the desired goal of possessing a strong fleet." *

An illuminating commentary on the pre-War psychology of German statesmanship.

* "Imperial Germany," pages 30 and 31 (1914 edition).

CHAPTER III

THE CHANCELLORSHIP OF BÜLOW

WHEN in 1900 Prince Hohenlohe retired, worn out with the weight of years and the pin-pricking of an unruly Reichstag and an unsympathetic press, there was one person to whom the eyes of the Kaiser naturally turned, Count (since Prince) Von Bülow, who had been Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs since the middle of 1897. He had already given active and able assistance in the process of ringing up the curtain for the new piece. The occupation of Kiao Chau; the acquisition of a German foothold in Polynesia and Samoa; the project, over which the Kaiser and his minister, after making a trip to the East together, were already brooding, of a Bagdad railway with its infinite possibilities; were "prologues to the omen coming on." Not less significant was the passing in 1897-8 of the first Navy Law, of which Bülow was an enthusiastic supporter, and the wreckage by Germany, of course under his instruc-

tions, of the first Hague Conference in 1899. Here there seemed to be a man after the Kaiser's own heart.

He was of a different type from any of the predecessors. He was still relatively young, and the Kaiser, who has not, perhaps, much reason to love him, bears witness to the charm of his personality, his conversational and linguistic powers, and the width and versatility of his culture. History will regret that his many gifts—and opportunities—were not turned to a better purpose. For he was largely responsible for the fatal orientation of policy which dissipated the moral and the political capital of Germany, and brought about her self-isolation and her ultimate downfall.

The Kaiser tells us how in one of his first talks with the new Chancellor he gave him some hints for beginners in the higher walks of diplomacy. In particular, he instructed him "how best to handle the English," pointing out that "the Englishman in presenting his point of view, and working for his interests, was inconsiderate to the point of brutality; for which reason he thoroughly understood anybody who acted similarly towards him." Consequently there must be no *finessing* with an

Englishman. "Such devious methods would be successful only in dealing with Latin and Slavic races." "I said this," adds the Kaiser, "with particular emphasis since *finessing* was especially dear to the diplomatic character of Bülow, and had become second nature to him."

Prince Bülow, alone among the Kaiser's Chancellors, had the accomplishments and resources of an able and adroit parliamentarian. Not that he favoured the adoption of a genuine parliamentary system in Germany. He sees its advantages elsewhere; and nothing can be more sagacious than his remark that "the parties in a country governed by parliament possess a salutary corrective that we lack, in the prospect of having to rule themselves, and the necessity of their being able to do so." He adopts a description once given to him by a fellow-countryman of the German party system: "Our parties do not feel as if they were actors who perform in the play, but as if they were the critics who looked on." In Germany "the monarchical Governments are the supporters and creators of the Constitution; the parties are secondary formations. We lack the preliminary conditions, both natural and historical, for a parliamentary system."

Again, "our party system has inherited the dogmatism and small-mindedness, the moroseness and the spite, that used to thrive in the squabbles of the German tribes and states."

In Imperial Germany, therefore, with the semblance, and many of the forms, but without the substance, of parliamentary government, the success of a Chancellor depended largely upon his skill in forming and keeping together from among the warring groups a temporary Coalition, with a working majority. Such was the famous *Cartel,* organised by Bismarck, between the Conservatives and the so-called National Liberals. Prince Bülow repeated the coup in January, 1907, when by his successful seduction of the "ultra-Liberals," he brought into existence the *"Block,"* which gave him a majority over any possible combination.* "Since 1907" (he records with complacency) "the Ultra-Liberals have supported all Armament Bills. The Army and Navy Bills of the spring of 1912 were accepted by them in the same way as were the great

* In the elections of January, 1907, the number of the Social Democrats in the Reichstag was reduced from 81 to 43. They had their revenge in 1912 when they numbered 110, and became the strongest single party in the House.

increase in the Army in the summer of 1913, and the demands of Colonial policy."

Prince Bülow thus got rid of the principal domestic obstacle to the smooth and continuous pursuit of the *Weltpolitik*.

Very soon after the beginning of the new régime the Kaiser came to England to attend the death-bed and the funeral of Queen Victoria. I am permitted to quote some dicta which he let fall during this visit to a Cabinet colleague of Lord Salisbury, then Prime Minister. "Lord Salisbury," he observed, "is antiquated. He is obsessed by the idea that there is a balance of power in Europe. There is no balance of power in Europe, except *Me*—me and my 25 corps. . . . I can double them the day war breaks out." *

"England" (he went on) "is short-sighted. Without alliances, her fate will be to be ultimately pressed out between Russia and the United States. With my army and your fleet, that combination against us will be powerless."

The general impression left upon the English statesman by the Emperor's conversation (the year

* He appears to have used the same language to Lord Lansdowne, then Foreign Secretary. See: Eckardstein: "Ten Years at the Court of St. James's," p. 192.

was 1901) amounted to this: "You have no army: I have no fleet. I want a place in the sun. If I seize it, your fleet can keep the United States off my back, and enable me to defy the Monroe Doctrine, and hold myself sufficiently free to keep Russia in check. You, on the other hand, can with my assistance take what part you like in Europe, and check Russia in the East." All his "arguments and quips" tended in the same direction.

Such was the Kaiser's attitude when his navy was still in its swaddling bands, and the *Weltpolitik* had hardly begun to materialise. I have been informed that ten years later, in 1911 at the end of his last visit to England, he said quite openly to the British officers who were attached to him and saw him off at Leith, that Nemesis would fall upon Great Britain for neglecting his proffers of Alliance.

Finally, on this point, the Kaiser himself reports that on the occasion of King Edward's visit to Kiel (1904) the Chancellor (Bülow) in an interview with the King raised a discussion as to the "possible conclusion of an alliance between Germany and England." "The King stated that such a thing was not at all necessary in the case of our

two countries, since there was no real cause for enmity or strife between them." This straightforward and sensible declaration, as all who had the honour to serve King Edward and to share his counsels well know, expressed his sincere and lasting convictions. The Kaiser's comment upon it is significant: "This refusal to make an alliance was a plain sign of the English policy of encirclement."

In the chapters which immediately follow I deal with the development of Kaiserism under the Bülow régime. But this will be the appropriate place to dispose of the "Chamberlain episode" upon which the Kaiser lays some stress.

The Chamberlain Negotiations

The Kaiser gives two different accounts of Mr. Chamberlain's "overtures," in one of which he makes the date 1901 and in the other "towards the close of the nineties." He alleges in substance that what was proposed was an Anglo-German alliance directed against Russia, and that "Price Bülow, in full agreement with me, declined politely but emphatically thus to disturb the peace of Europe."

I have no personal knowledge of this affair, of

which the world will no doubt receive a full and authentic account in Mr. Chamberlain's forthcoming biography. But quite enough is known already to disprove, and even to render ridiculous, the Kaiser's allegations. They are indeed completely blown to pieces by Baron von Eckardstein, who was at the time under-study to Count Hatzfeldt at the German Embassy in London, and in close and confidential relations with Holstein, the *Eminence grise* for many years of the Foreign Office in Berlin.

The Kaiser paid a short visit to Windsor in the early days of the Boer War (Nov., 1899); he was accompanied by Count Bülow, then Foreign Secretary. I can give in outline what took place in the words of a correspondent, who has first-hand knowledge of the facts.

"The German Emperor stayed at Windsor, and Mr. Chamberlain was invited to meet him. After a little talk the Emperor asked him to see Bülow. They had a long talk, the upshot of which was that it was very desirable that the difficulties between Germany and England should be removed, but that public opinion was unfavourable in both countries, at the time."

(It is to be remembered that the Kruger telegram had not been forgotten in England, and that popular sympathy in Germany was almost wholly on the side of the Boers.) Bülow asked Mr. Chamberlain to take the first step in order that, when he himself spoke in Germany, he might have a better public opinion. Mr. Chamberlain replied that his difficulties with public opinion here were not less, but that he had risked his fortunes more than once for what he thought was a good cause, and he was prepared to take the risk again. He said he was speaking at Leicester in about a fortnight's time, and that he would deal with the matter there, and (at Bülow's special request) would introduce America into the discussion.

Bülow said that the date suited him admirably, as he was speaking in the Reichstag on foreign affairs a few days later, and Mr. Chamberlain's speech would give him the opportunity for a friendly reply, which would carry matters forward.

Accordingly, on November 30th (after the Kaiser had left England), Mr. Chamberlain made his speech at Leicester on the lines agreed between him and Bülow. It contained the following passages:

"There is something more which I think any far seeing English Statesman must have long desired, and that is that we should not remain permanently isolated on the Continent of Europe, and I think that the moment that aspiration was formed it must have appeared evident to everybody that the natural alliance is between ourselves and the Great German Empire. We have had our differences with Germany, we have had our quarrels and contentions: we have had our misunderstandings. I do not conceal that the people of this Country have been irritated and justly irritated by circumstances which we are only too glad to forget, but at the root of things there has always been a force which has necessarily brought us together. What then unites nations? Interest and Sentiment. What interest have we which is contrary to the interest of Germany?

"I cannot conceive any point which can arise in the immediate future which would bring ourselves and the Germans into antagonism of interests. On the contrary I can see many things in the future which must be a cause of anxiety to the statesmen of Europe, but in which our interests are clearly the same as the interests of Germany and in which that understanding of which I have spoken in the case of America, might, if extended to Germany, do more perhaps than any combination of arms in order to preserve the peace of the World.

"If the union between England and America is a powerful factor in the cause of peace, a new Triple Alliance between the Teutonic race and the two branches of the Anglo-Saxon race will be a still more potent influence in the future of the World. I have used the word 'alliance' . . . but again I desire to make it clear that to me it seems to matter little whether you have an

alliance which is committed to paper, or whether you have an understanding in the minds of the statesmen of the respective countries. An understanding is perhaps better than alliance which may stereotype arrangements which cannot be regarded as permanent in view of the changing circumstances from day to day."

This narrative is completely corroborated by a letter, written the day after the speech (December 1st, 1899), by Mr. Chamberlain to Baron Eckardstein. It should be noted that Lord Salisbury while reserving his own freedom of action, was cognisant and approved of Mr. Chamberlain's procedure, and that from first to last there was no suggestion or hint that the proposed drawing together of Great Britain and Germany was inspired by, or directed to, hostility against Russia.

The Leicester speech had a "bad press" in this country and created a still worse impression in Germany. What happened can be best told in Baron von Eckardstein's words: "When the speech made by Chamberlain at Leicester advocating an Anglo-German alliance was reported in Germany, there broke out a storm of indignation both in the press and in parliament at the very idea of such an association. The position of Count Bülow thereafter became one of very great diffi-

culty. But all the same it was a great blunder, and one that later was to cost us dear, that he should thereupon have knuckled under to the Anglophobes, by throwing over Chamberlain in a speech in the Reichstag, and by practically repudiating further relations with him. For, after all, he had distinctly encouraged Chamberlain to give public expression to the exchange of views they had had together at Windsor."

Count Bülow's speech in the Reichstag here referred to was delivered on December 11, 1899, on the Estimates which included provision for the increase of the German Navy. He threw cold water on the idea of an Anglo-German rapprochement, and justified the rise in the Estimates on the ground of changed international conditions. And he crystallised his views in a memorable phrase: "In the new century, Germany must be either the hammer or the anvil."

On the 28th December, 1899, the incident was closed by a letter from Mr. Chamberlain to Baron von Eckardstein which contains the following expressions: "I will say no more here about the way in which Bülow has treated me. But in any case I think we must drop all further negotiations on the

question of the Alliance. . . . Everything was going on well, and even Lord Salisbury had become quite favourable, and in entire agreement with us, as to the future developments of Anglo-German relations. But alas it was not to be."

For two years later (1899-1901) there were from time to time desultory pourparlers between Eckardstein and Chamberlain, who summed up his experiences by saying that "it was a bad job to try to do business with Berlin. . . . So long as Bülow was in power, he (Mr. Chamberlain) would not move another finger for an understanding with Germany."

CHAPTER IV

THE END OF THE BÜLOW RÉGIME

THOUGH in chronological order it comes later than some of the events which are narrated in subsequent chapters, it will be convenient to deal here, as summarily as may be, with the incident which ultimately led to the downfall of Prince Bülow.

On the 28th October, 1908, an "Interview with the Kaiser" was published in the London *Daily Telegraph.* In substance, the Kaiser's object was to show that it was He (for he pointedly distinguished himself in this respect from the middle and lower classes in Germany) who was England's best European friend. He especially instanced his attitude during the Boer War, when he had repelled the joint request of France and Russia to join in saving the two Republics and in "humiliating England to the dust"; refused to receive the Boer delegates in Berlin, "where the German people would have crowned them with flowers"; and after

the "Black Week" in December, 1899, had worked out with his own hand and sent to Windsor, a plan of campaign "much on the same lines" as that which was afterwards successfully adopted by Lord Roberts.

This interview, the object of which the Kaiser now tells us, was "the improvement of German-English relations" let loose a tornado of criticism which raged for a time in France, Russia and Great Britain, but nowhere with such vehemence as in Germany itself. The Kaiser declares that before publication he sent the draft for examination by the Chancellor, to whom, through a series of mistakes in the Foreign Office, it was not forwarded. Prince Bülow read it for the first time in the newspapers, and at once sent in his resignation, which was not accepted. There followed tumultuous debates in the Reichstag, when the Kaiser complains that he was not defended by the Chancellor "to the extent that I expected." This is a mild way of putting it. Prince Bülow described the statements in the interview as to intervention in South Africa as "coloured," and as for His Majesty's plan of campaign, all that he had written amounted to no more than "military aphorisms." He added that the in-

cident must "induce the Emperor in future to observe that reserve even in private conversations which is equally indispensable in the interest of a uniform policy, and for the authority of the Crown. Were that not so, neither I nor any successor of mine would assume the responsibility."

A few days later (17 November, 1908) the Prince had an audience, as the result of which it was officially announced that "His Majesty approved the statements of the Imperial Chancellor in the Reichstag, and gave Prince Bülow the assurance of his "continued confidence." The Kaiser's own account is more "coloured." "The Chancellor," he says, "appeared, lectured me on my political sins, and asked me to sign the document which was afterwards communicated to the press. I signed it in silence."

This affair was the greatest personal humiliation which was inflicted on the Emperor during his reign. A few months later Prince Bülow ceased to be Chancellor (28th June, 1909). The breach between him and his Master, though ostensibly patched up for a time, was irreparable. Their long partnership in the great adventure of *Weltpolitik* was dissolved.

The Kaiser sums up his Minister's services in these significant words: "He succeeded, by his skill, in avoiding a world war at several moments of crisis; during the period indeed, when I, *together with von Tirpitz,* was building our protecting fleet."

The Prince recommended as his successor Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg, who became the Fifth Chancellor of the Empire.

CHAPTER V

THE "ENCIRCLEMENT" OF GERMANY, PART I

THE legend of the "encirclement" of Germany in the years before the war is a prime article of faith with the Kaiser. Its initiation, as well as its active prosecution, is usually attributed by German apologists (like Prince Bülow) to King Edward VII, a model constitutional sovereign, who never acted in foreign or in domestic affairs without the advice of his ministers, and whose natural shrewdness and tact, with an intimate knowledge of other countries, were an invaluable asset to his own. The Kaiser, while fully sharing his compatriots' belief in the maleficient activity of his uncle, finds the real origin of the policy of "encirclement" in a transaction which is alleged to have taken place long before King Edward succeeded to the throne, and 17 years before the outbreak of the War. This contribution to the history of our times should be given in the Kaiser's own

words. It is the legend of what he calls the "Gentleman's agreement."

"In a book 'The Problem of Japan,' which appeared anonymously at The Hague in 1918, by an 'Ex-Diplomat from the Far East,' an excerpt was published from a work of the American Professor Usher, of the Washington University, at St. Louis. . . ." Usher in his book published in 1913, made known for the first time the existence and contents of an agreement, or secret treaty, between England, America, and France dating from the spring of 1897. In this it was stipulated that, in case Germany or Austria or both of them, should begin a war for the sake of Pan-Germanism (*sic*), the United States should at once declare in favour of England and France, and go to the support of these Powers with all its resources."

"This"—continues the Kaiser—"is truly amazing. . . . Seventeen years before the beginning of the World War, this treaty was made by the United Anglo-Saxons, and its goal was systematically envisaged throughout the entire period." Now one can understand the ease with which King Edward VII could pursue his policy of encircle-

ment; for years the principal actors had been united and in readiness. . . .

"The Treaty directed against Germany—sometimes called the 'Gentleman's agreement' of the spring of 1897—is the basis, the point of departure, for this war which was systematically developed by the Entente countries for 17 years. When they had succeeded in winning over Russia and Japan for their purposes, they struck the blow, after Serbia had staged the Serajevo murder, and had thus touched the match to the carefully filled powder barrel."

In regard to America he adds: "Perhaps the unfriendly answer given by President Wilson to the German Government at the beginning of the War may have some connection with the Gentleman's agreement." . . . And again "Wilson's alleged reasons for going to war, and war aims, were not the real ones. (He was) resolved, probably from the start, certainly from 1915, to range himself against Germany and to fight. She (America) did the latter, alleging the U-boat warfare as a pretext: in reality under the influence of powerful financial groups, and yielding to the pressure and progress of her partner France, whose resources in

man power were becoming more and more exhausted. America did not wish to leave a weakened France alone with England, whose annexation designs on Calais, Dunkirk, etc., were well known to her."

I have quoted textually the substance of this passage: not only because the Kaiser finds in this imaginary agreement the key which unlocks the whole complicated and Machiavellian mechanism of the policy of the Allies; but because though by no means a solitary, it is perhaps a palmary illustration of his bottomless reservoir of credulity.

The whole story is of such a character that one would have thought that it could not have imposed upon the intelligence of even a newly weaned infant in the political nursery.

The "Gentleman's agreement" is supposed to have been made in the spring of 1897, when, by the way, Pan-Germanism (against which it was directed) in the sense of a definite creed, or an organised movement, was still in the chrysalis stage. The relations between Great Britain and France were at that time in a state of tension; in the following year the incident at Fashoda nearly brought a rupture. Moreover, the merest tyro in diplomacy

might be supposed to know that an engagement of this kind was absolutely repugnant to the traditional and settled policy of the Government and people of the United States.

Nevertheless, as the Kaiser more than once asserts that this agreement was the starting point of the policy of "Encirclement," and the fountain head of the Great War. I have been at the trouble to explore the ground, and my investigations have been kindly assisted by the Foreign Offices of all the three Powers supposed to be concerned—Great Britain, the United States and France.

I applied in the first instance to our own Foreign Office, and have been favoured with the following Memorandum from Sir William Tyrrell—the Assistant Under Secretary of State:

Foreign Office, S. W. 1.
6th September, 1922.

"I have caused a careful examination to be made of the Foreign Office archives and find nothing to support in any way the suggestion that a secret understanding was come to in 1897 between England, France and the United States of America directed against Germany, Austria and Pan-Ger-

manism. Professor Usher himself admits with regard to the alleged 'treaty' ("Problems of Japan," p. 120) that 'no papers of any sort were signed, and that no pledges were given which circumstances would not justify any one of the contracting parties in denying or possibly repudiating.' "

"When His Majesty's Ambassador at Washington endeavoured in March, 1898, to ascertain the attitude of the United States Government on the possible complications in China and the Far East, he was verbally informed that the President was in sympathy with the policy of open trade in China, but saw no reason for the departure of the United States of America from its traditional policy respecting foreign alliances and of avoiding as far as possible any interference in the connection of European complications.

"Again in July, 1898, when the *Imparcial* of Madrid reproduced extracts from an unnamed Belgian newspaper respecting the alleged conclusion of a secret Convention between England and the United States of America for military and other

assistance, His Majesty's Ambassador at Madrid was authorised to make a plump contradiction.

"During the course of a debate on supply in the House of Commons in June, 1898, Mr. Chamberlain, then Colonial Secretary, made the following statement explaining the position respecting a possible alliance with the United States of America: 'The Americans do not want our alliance at this moment. They do not ask for our assistance, and we do not want theirs at this moment. But will anyone say that the occasion may not arise, foreseen as it has been by some American statesmen, who have said that there is a possibility in the future that Anglo-Saxon liberty and Anglo-Saxon interests may hereafter be menaced by a great combination of other Powers? Yes, Sir, I think that such a thing is possible, and in that case, whether it be America or whether it be England that is menaced, I hope that blood will be found to be thicker than water.'

"I therefore think we can honestly say that there is no foundation at all for the statement in Professor Usher's book (of which there is a copy in the Foreign Office Library) repeated by the ex-Kaiser."

Next, I invoked the good offices of Sir Auckland Geddes, our Ambassador to the United States, and asked him to be kind enough to inquire of the State Department of Washington, whether they could discover any trace of such a transaction.

Mr. Hughes, the Secretary of State, gave the matter prompt and courteous attention, and I am able to reproduce his reply to the Ambassador:

Department of State,
Washington.
October 3rd, 1922.

"Referring to the copy of the personal letter to you from Mr. Asquith, which you left with me a few days ago, I beg to inform you that I did not fail to look into the matter, and I find that the book to which reference is made in THE MEMOIRS OF THE KAISER is THE PROBLEM OF JAPAN, written 'By an Ex-Counsellor of Legation in The Far East,' and published in 1918 by C. L. van Langenhuysen, of Amsterdam and Rotterdam. Chapter 8 of that book, beginning on Page 119, quotes in its entirety Chapter 10 from Mr. Roland G. Usher's book on PAN GERMANISM, which is the name of the book to which Mr. Asquith refers as one that he did not

know. You will find that in the edition of 1913 Chapter 10 begins on Page 139.

"The story of the secret treaty is wholly without foundation. I have had a careful search made but I can find nothing whatsoever in the records of the Department to substantiate it, or in fact anything that would afford the smallest ground in support of Mr. Usher's allegations.

"I am, etc.,

"CHARLES E. HUGHES."

Finally, to complete the circle of negation, I put myself in communication with M. Poincaré, with whom I have the honour of a personal friendship now of considerable standing; and I addressed to him a similar inquiry in regard to the archives of the Quai d'Orsay.

M. Poincaré's reply is as follows:

Paris, 28th October, 1922.

J' ai été tres heureux de recevoir de vos nouvelles, et je vous prie d'être assuré que je n'ai pas oublié, moi non plus, les excellentes relations que j'ai eues avec vous en des heures si troublées.

Je crois, comme vous, qu'il ne faut pas nous

lasser de repondre a des calomnies toujours renaissantes. Mais celles de l'ancien Empereur sont vraiment misérables.

Il n'y a, bien entendu, aucune trace au Quai d'Orsay du prétendu accord franco-anglo-américain de 1897.

Je vous envoie ci-joint une note détaillée sur cette question. Vous pouvez démentir l'allégation de l'Ex-Empereur, au nom de la France, aussi bien qu'au nom de l'Angleterre.

Croyez, etc., R. POINCARÉ.

(*Translation*)

Paris, 28th October, 1922.

I was very glad to hear from you, and I assure you that I have not forgotten either the excellent terms which we both were on when the times were so troubled.

I believe as you do that it will not do to take no notice of the calumnies which are always being revived. But those of the former Emperor are really dreadful.

There is of course no trace in the Quai d'Orsay of the pretended Franco-Anglo-American agreement of 1897.

I enclose a detailed report of this subject. You can deny the statement of the ex-Kaiser in the name of France as well as in that of England.

I remain, etc.

The memorandum enclosed in M. Poincaré's letter is in the following terms:

Note

au sujet du soi disant accord de 1897 entre l'Angleterre, les Etats-Unis et la France.

Toutes les recherches faites aux Archives des Affaires Etrangères permettent d'affirmer que les assertions de Guillaume II relativement à un accord conclu au printemps de 1897 entre l'Angleterre, les Etats-Unis et la France ne reposent sur aucun fondement authentique.

Ces assertions s'appuient sur un livre anonyme, "The Problem of Japan" paru à Amsterdam en 1918.

L'auteur du dit volume reproduit des déclarations d'un professeur américain, M. Usher, auxquelles il a ajouté les clauses d'un traité supposé. Il déclare notamment pouvoir "fixer les stipula-

tions de l'accord dans leurs lignes générales approximativement. . . ."

L'Empereur a regardé ce traité supposé *comme un traité* véritable *dirigé contre l'Espagne, l'Allemagne et d'autres pays encore. Ce faisant, il a déformé completement les déclarations du professeur Usher. Celui-ci n'a jamais dit qu'il y ait eu en 1897 un accord signé entre les Etats-Unis, l'Angleterre et la France. Il dit même le contraire.*

"Il ne semble pas," écrit Usher, "que l'on ait échangé de gages officiels d'aucune sorte; . . . des promesses ou engagements eûssent été sans effet, aucun Gouvernement américain ne pouvant, suivant la Constitution, lier ses successeurs."

D'après Usher, les Etats-Unis comme l'Angleterre et la France se seraient sentis menacés par un seccês possible du pan-germanisme. Il constate un état d'esprit, mais n'affirme pas qu'il y ait eu un accord.

Les renseignements d'Usher, bien interprêtés, contredisent donc les assertions de Guillaume II et pour cause.

Il n'existe en effet, aux Archives des Affaires Etrangères, aucune trace de l'accord supposé.

L'examen de la correspondence politique de M. Patenôtre, ambassadeur de France aux Etats-Unis en 1897, montre que le Gouvernement fédéral comme l'opinion était loin alors d'envisager un engagement si contraire à la tradition politique américaine.

On peut se demander si la supposition d'un accord franco-anglo-américain n'a pas germé dans l'esprit de l'empereur à la suite des négociations d'un traité d'arbitrage, entamées dès 1890 sur l'initiative du Secrétaire d'Etat Blaine auprès de toutes les nations. Ces négociations, demeurées sans suite en 1897 avec l'Angleterre, comme avec la France, ont abouti, pour celle-ci, à la Convention du 10 février 1908.

D'autre part, il a été conclu en 1908 un accord entre les Etats-Unis et le Japon, relativement à la politique et aux intentions des deux Gouvernements dans le région du Pacifique, accord dont M. Vignaud, chargé d'affaires des Etats-Unis, faisait part confidentiellement à M. Pichon par la lettre ci-jointe. C'est peut-être cet accord, connu sous le nom de "gentleman's agreement" qui a suscité une confusion dans la mémoire de l'Empereur.

M. Henry VIGNAUD, *chargé d'affaires des Etats-Unis a* PARIS *à M. Stephen* PICHON, *Ministre des Affaires Etrangères.*

Paris, le 23 novembre 1908.

J'ai l'honneur d'informer V. Ex. que je suis chargé télégraphiquement par M. Root de faire savoir confidentiellement au Gouvernement de la République que les Etats-Unis sont sur le point d'échanger avec le Japon des notes qui comprendront les déclarations suivantes relativement à la politique et aux intentions des deux Gouvernements dans la région du Pacifique.

1. Que c'est le désir des Etats-Unis et du Japon d'encourager le libre et pacifique développement de leur commerce dans l'Océan Pacifique.

2. La politique des deux Gouvernements qui n'est influencée par aucune disposition agressive, vise au maintien du status quo, tel qu'il existe dans la région du Pacifique, et à la défense du principe qui leur est commun de laisser, en Chine, une égale facilité au commerce et à l'industrie.

3. En raison de cette manière de voir, les deux Gouvernements sont fermement résolus à respecter

réciproquement les possessions territoriales qui leur appartiennent dans cette région.

4. Les deux Gouvernements sont aussi résolus à sauve-garder les intéréts commerciaux de toutes les Puissances en Chine, en soutenant par tous les moyens pacifiques qui sont à leur disposition, l'indépendance et l'intégrité de la Chine, ainsi que le principe d'égale facilité pour le commerce et l'industrie de toutes les nations dans cet Empire.

5. S'il survenait quelque évènement qui serait de nature à menacer soit le status quo, tel qu'il est exposé ici, soit le principe d'égale opportunité pour tous, défini cidessus, ensemble dans le but d'arriver à une entente sur les mesures qu'il pourrait être utile de prendre.

En portant ainsi d'avance cette information à la connaissance de Votre Excellence, le Secrétaire d'Etat de mon Gouvernement rappelle avec satisfaction l'accord qui existe entre les déclarations précitées et la politique relative à l'Empire de la Chine et aux intérêts étrangers dans cette région, sur laquelle les Etats-Unis et la France ont eu, à différentes reprises, l'occasion d'exprimer des vues identiques, vues qui ont, en dernier lieu, trouvé leur expression dans l'arrangement du 10 Juin 1907,

entre la République française et le Japon, auquel les présentes déclarations ne sont pas sans analogie.

(*Translation*)

Note

on the subject of the pretended agreement of 1897 between England, the United States and France.

All examinations made of the records of the Foreign Office in Paris enable us to state that the assertions of Wilhelm II with regard to an agreement concluded in the spring of 1897 between England, the United States and France do not rest on any authentic foundation.

These assertions are founded on an anonymous book, "The Problem of Japan," which appeared in Amsterdam in 1918.

The author of this work reproduces the statements of an American Professor, Mr. Usher, to which he adds the clauses of a supposed treaty. He declares especially that he is able to "give the terms of an agreement in their general approximately exact lines."

The Kaiser regarded this *supposed* treaty as a *real* treaty directed against Spain, Germany and

other countries. This being so, he completely altered the statements of Professor Usher. The latter never said that any agreement was signed in 1897 between America, England and France. In fact, he states the contrary.

"It does not appear," writes Usher, "that any official undertakings of any kind were exchanged; and any promises or engagements would have been useless, for no American Government could bind its successors, according to the Constitution."

According to Usher, the United States, England and France would feel themselves threatened if Pan-Germanism succeeded. This was an opinion, but he does not say that there was any agreement.

The statements made by Usher, properly interpreted, contradict the assertions of Wilhelm II, and with reason.

In fact there is no trace among the Records of the Foreign Office in Paris of the supposed agreement. The examination of the political correspondence of M. Patenôtre, French Ambassador to America in 1897, shows that the Federal Government and public opinion were quite opposed to any idea of an engagement contrary to the tradition of American politics.

It may be asked if the idea of a Franco-Anglo-American agreement did not originate in the mind of the Kaiser in consequence of negotiations for a Treaty of Arbitration instituted from the year 1890 on the initiative of the Secretary of State Blaine among all the Powers. These negotiations which had no result in 1897 in England or in France, led for the latter to the Convention of the 10th February 1908.

Again, an agreement was made in 1908 between the United States and Japan, with respect to the politics and intentions of both States in the Pacific zone, and this agreement was communicated in confidence by M. Vignaud, Chargé d'Affaires for the United States, to M. Pichon in the enclosed letter. It was perhaps this agreement, known as "the gentleman's agreement," which caused confusion in the recollection of the Kaiser.

M. Henry VIGNAUD, Chargé d'Affaires for America to PARIS to M. Stephen PICHON, Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Paris, 23rd November 1908.

I have the honour to inform your Excellency that I have received telegraphic instructions from Mr.

Root to acquaint your Excellency in confidence, for the Government of the Republic of France that the United States are on the point of exchanging with Japan notes including the following declarations as to the politic and intentions of the two Powers in the Pacific zone.

1. It is the wish of the United States and of Japan to encourage the free and peaceful development of their trade in the Pacific Ocean.

2. The policy of the two Governments is not influenced by any motive of aggression, but aims at the maintenance of the status quo, as it already exists in the Pacific zone, and the defence of the principle common to both, to allow China equal facilities for trade and industry.

3. In consequence of this view, the two Governments have firmly decided to respect reciprocally the territorial possessions of both Powers in this district.

4. The two Powers have also decided to safeguard the commercial interests of all the Powers in China, maintaining by all pacific means in their power the independence and integrity of China as well as the principle of equal facilities for trade and industry for all countries in that Empire.

5. If any event should occur which might endanger the maintenance of the status quo, as explained in this agreement, such steps will be taken as may seem necessary to maintain the principle of equal facilities for all, and all measures deemed advisable for this purpose will be arrived at.[1]

In bringing this information in advance to the notice of Your Excellency, the Secretary of State of my Government recalls with satisfaction the agreement which exists between the declarations made above and the policy with respect to the Empire of China and foreign interests in that place, to which the United States and France have frequently had the opportunity of referring, expressing similar views on the subject, which views have moreover found their expression in the arrangement come to on the 10th June 1907, between the French Republic and Japan, and the present declarations are not without analogy to the views mentioned.

[1] In reference to clause 5 above, the official American text of this agreement as issued by the State Department (Treaty Series No. 511½) reads as follows:

5. Should any event occur threatening the status quo as above described or the principle of equal opportunity as above defined, it remains for the two Governments to communicate with each other in order to arrive at an understanding as to what measures they may consider useful to take.—*Publisher's Note.*

CHAPTER VI

THE "ENCIRCLEMENT" OF GERMANY, PART II

PRINCE BÜLOW'S theory of the British policy of "encirclement" is at any rate intelligible.

He makes no secret of the fact that the motive of German policy, as pursued by the Kaiser, and by himself while the Kaiser's Minister, was to secure for Germany such an undisputed and indisputable dominance in Europe as would render possible the attainment of her new ambitions, industrial and political, in the rest of the world. This is really the theme of his book "Imperial Germany," originally written and published (as I have stated above) some months before the outbreak of the Great War. At that time there was no need to veil or to apologise for a line of action which seemed to the author to be heading straight to ultimate success.

I do not wish to overload my pages with proofs of the obvious; it will suffice to cite one or two typical passages:

"Our new world policy was to be an extension, not a shifting, of the field of our political activities. We must never forget" (this was written in 1913) "that the consolidation of our position as a Great Power in Europe has made it possible for us to transpose our industrial activity into a world activity, and our Continental policy into a world policy. Our world policy is based upon the successes of our European policy. The moment the firm foundation constituted by Germany's position as a great European Power begins to totter, the whole fabric of our world policy will collapse." (P. 51.)

It was, of course, to be a progressive process: "After entering the ranks of the Sea Powers we continued quietly on the same course as heretofore. The new era of unbounded German world policy, which was so often foretold abroad, *has not dawned.* But we certainly had acquired the means of effectively promoting our interests, of resisting aggression, and of maintaining and developing our position everywhere, especially in Asia Minor, the Far East, and Africa. As our problem in world politics increased, the web of our international relations had to be extended." He proceeds to instance his

efforts to cultivate the friendship of the United States and of Japan. (P. 44.)

No comment is needed upon these candid and unambiguous avowals. From an early stage in its development the ends of the new departure in German statesmanship became growingly plain to clear-sighted observers. But the means pursued by the maladroit successors of Prince Bismarck led in the long run, not to the hegemony but to the self-isolation of Germany.

The Triple Alliance was still to all appearance in working order. Austria had become in external affairs, to all intents and purposes, a mere appendage of Germany. Once, and once only she asserted her right of independent action, when in 1908, in defiance of the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin, Baron Aerenthal, the cleverest and perhaps the least scrupulous of the Austrian statesmen of our time, annexed the provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was a shameless breach of the public law of Europe; but though the best German opinion was hostile, the Kaiser and Prince Bülow were equal to the occasion. Prince Bülow records with complacency that "the German sword was thrown into the scale of European decision, directly

in support of our Austro-Hungarian ally!" Not for the first time Austria (and the rest of the world) was to be shown her dependence as a "brilliant second" upon Germany. It was in reference to the part played by Germany, as accessory, if not before, at any rate after, the fact, that the Kaiser a year later made in Vienna his famous "shining armour" speech; a variant upon the old themes of the "mailed fist" and the "well-ground sword."

It is interesting that Prince Bülow should consider this incident to have been the supreme test, and to mark the final failure of "the encircling policy of Edward VII," which "proved" (he says) to be a "diplomatic illusion devoid of political actuality." So that, in his view apparently, that policy ceased (from 1909) to be a decisive or even a predominant factor in European diplomacy. If this is so, he is at complete issue with his successor, Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg, who as lately as August, 1915, when the War had been a year in progress, made the following declaration in the Reichstag: "King Edward VII believed that his principal task was to isolate Germany. The encirclement by the Entente with openly hostile tendencies was drawn closer year by year. We were

compelled to reply to this situation with the great Armament Budget of 1913."

So it would seem that the spectre of "encirclement," which Prince Bülow thought he had finally laid in 1909, continued for years afterwards to haunt the Wilhelmstrasse.

The lawless annexation of Bosnia, at the initiative of Austria and with the complicity of Germany, which ought to have opened the eyes of the world to the value set by the two Powers on the sanctity of international engagements, is a fact of capital importance in the history of the origins of the Great War. As M. Poincaré justly points out, the events of 1914, when Austria was again the originator of, and Germany the all-powerful accessory to, a great international crime, go back in the chain of causation to the events of 1908-9. Serbia, which was naturally and legitimately indignant at the outrage done by the annexation to her neighbours and kinsmen, and saw in it another step to one of the constant aims of Austrian policy—her own economic and political subjection—was ultimately bullied into unwilling acquiescence. There is no more disgraceful incident in modern history than the Agram trial, when some 50 Serbs and

Croats were charged with an imaginary plot for the establishment of an independent Serbia, upon the strength of false documents, forged at the Austrian Legation at Belgrade under the orders of Count Forgach, who remained till the outbreak of the War in 1914 an influential member of the inner Councils of the Empire.

The Kaiser's attitude in this matter never changed; his hostility to the Slavs was a constant, and as it proved, a fatal obsession. Three years after the Bosnia affair, we have a letter from him to his friend Ballin. Ballin was perhaps the best and most sagacious type of the great business captains, who did so much to develop German industry and commerce at home and overseas in the Kaiser's reign. During his administration of the Hamburg-Amerika line, the size of the passenger ships rose from 3,000 to over 50,000 tons, and their speed from 14 knots to nearly 25. Ballin was no specialist; he appears to have been a man of sound general judgment and of enlarged vision. He became an associate, and in some matters a close confidant, of the Kaiser, but in his familiar letters to his friends he constantly expressed (as did his correspondent and friend Sir Ernest Cassel) the contempt of a

real man of affairs for the narrow-minded clique of Prussian Junkers and bureaucrats (he calls it a "Chinese Wall") by which the Kaiser allowed himself to be hemmed in from the vulgar world.

The "Slav subjects of Austria," writes the Kaiser to Ballin, 15th December, 1912,* "have become very restless and could only be brought to reason by resolute action of the whole Dual Monarchy against Serbia. . . . If we were compelled to take up arms we should do so to assist Austria not only against Russian aggression, but also against the Slavs in general and in her efforts to remain German. . . . It is beyond our power to prevent this struggle, because the future of the Hapsburg Monarchy and that of our own country are both at stake. It is therefore a question on which depends the very existence of the Germanic race on the continent of Europe."

As will be seen later on, William II was at this time obsessed and indeed hypnotised by the doctrines propounded in a superficial book—"The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century"; the work of a Germanised Englishman, Houston Chamber-

* "Albert Ballin," by B. Huldermann, Eng. trans. Cassell, 1922, p. 190.

lain. The thesis of the book is that everything in history depends on Race, and that nothing in the long run can withstand the inherent and invincible supremacy of the Teutonic stock. The Kaiser drank all this in with eagerness and gusto; it exactly accorded with all his own free-possessions and prejudices; and it is essential to an understanding of his subsequent conduct to bear in mind that he had become, and remained to the end, practically anti-Slav.

The third member of the Triple Alliance, Italy, had never been a comfortable yoke-fellow.* Prince Bülow quaintly remarks that German "relations with Italy were, contrary to the accepted view (p. 65) of the character of the two nations, regarded by us from the sentimental, and by the Italians from a common-sense point of view." An odd statement in view of the carefully organised and ever-growing net-work of German interests, industrial and financial, in Italy. He thinks that the Alliance, on the whole, proved to be "of greater value to Italy than to the Central Powers." His-

* In 1902, Italy, while renewing the Triple Alliance, gave to France through Signor Prinetti a written assurance that she would observe neutrality in any war in which France was not the aggressor. She kept her word in 1914.

tory will describe it as a transient and unnatural union; so wide is the essential divergence between the ideals of policy, and the temperament and character, of the nations concerned. During 1912 and 1913 there was constant and growing friction between Italy and Austria due to Austrian policy in the Balkans and the creation of an independent Albania.

With Turkey, on the other hand, the Prince tells us that the Kaiser and his Chancellor "carefully cultivated good relations," which were "not of a sentimental nature"; for the "continued existence of Turkey served our interests from the industrial, military and political points of view."

As far back as November, 1898, no doubt in concert with Bülow, who was both his Secretary of State and his travelling companion, the Kaiser had taken occasion at Damascus to blow the bugle which heralded in the new German departure in the East in his most resonant style:

> "The 300,000,000 Mahomedans" (he declared) "who live scattered over the globe, may be assured of this, that the German Emperor will be their friend at all times."

The Prince, however, is right in declining to call the relationship thus inaugurated a "sentimental"

or altruistic friendship. The exploitation of Turkey (called by Bülow the "Wooing of Islam") became indeed one of the Kaiser's most cherished purposes, and was strenuously and sleeplessly pursued, with an almost cynical disregard to the fortunes of the subject Christian races, under the able supervision of von Marschall and von der Goltz. The maintenance of the integrity of the Ottoman Empire both in Europe and in Asia, the fomenting of differences between the Balkan States and the ultimate breaking up of the Balkan League, the cultivation of friendship with the two German-Austrian kings of Rumania and Bulgaria, and the opening of the land "corridor" for German trade and influence to the Far East—all these were indispensable parts of the grandiose policy of *Weltpolitik*.

If there ever had been a policy of "encirclement" —Prince Bülow would be justified in his boast that by the time he left office in 1909, it had been proved to be a complete failure.

CHAPTER VII

BETHMANN-HOLLWEG, 1909-1917

THE Parliamentary Block created by Prince Bülow had by this time (1909) fallen to pieces, and the new Chancellor had from the first to suffer (as he complains) "from the confusion of our internal political conditions." "No party wished to expose itself to the reproach of promoting Government policy." "The only solution was to manufacture a majority as occasion arose." "The confused and fluid condition of parties was most unfavourable to the conduct of foreign affairs." And though "the public read neither Nietzsche nor Bernhardi," yet there was an "ominous materialisation of the vital interests of public life," and "Pan-German ideas had gone far to turn German heads." *

The Kaiser and Herr von Bethmann seem to have got on fairly well together for a time, but an irreconcilable diversity of temperament soon began to disturb their relationship. "His inclination,"

* "Reflections on the World War," pp. 23-30.

says the Emperor, "to get to the bottom of problems" and "to deal only with what was thoroughly matured," "made working with him tiresome." He was moreover obstinate, fond of "laying down the law," and "always knew everything better than anybody else." "It became more and more apparent that he was remote from political realities."

Until Herr von Bethmann's accession there had been in Berlin to all intents and purposes three Foreign Offices, each often acting in ignorance or in independence of the others, and headed respectively by the Kaiser, the Chancellor, and the Secretary of State.

Lord Haldane recalls some pointed language on this matter, used to him on the occasion of a visit to Berlin in 1906, by Herr von Tschirshky, then Foreign Minister; it is to be remembered that the Foreign Secretary, unlike the Chancellor, was technically a Prussian, and not an Imperial officer. "Von Tschirshky observed to me that what he had been saying represented his view as Foreign Minister of Prussia, but that next door was the Chancellor, who might express quite a different view to me, if I asked him; and that if, later on, I went to the end of the Wilhelmstrasse, and turned down

Unter den Linden, I should come to the Schloss, where I might derive from the Emperor's lips an impression quite different from that given by either himself or the Chancellor." Lord Haldane adds that an "eminent foreign diplomatist" observed: "In this highly organised nation, when you have ascended to the very top story you find not only confusion but chaos." *

Bethmann did his best to straighten out this administrative muddle, and to centre in himself the whole direction of foreign policy.

The Kaiser, in his anxiety to disclaim personal responsibility for untoward incidents, explains that this concentration of authority in the Chancellor's hands was made possible by the Constitution of the Empire ("based" as it was "on the towering personality of Prince Bismarck"), which, in the event of a disagreement between the Emperor and the Chancellor, leaves the former no alternative but to yield to his Minister or dismiss him." He continued, however, to be an active intermeddler in all matters of importance, and in many which were not. He gives an amusing illustration of what used to

* "Before the War," pp. 70-71.

happen. Bethmann having appointed Kiderlen to be Secretary of State, in spite of the Kaiser's protests, came to him one day to complain of Kiderlen's insubordination, and "asked me to appeal to his conscience. I declined, with the observation that the Chancellor had chosen Kiderlen against my wishes, and must now manage to get along with him."

It was early in the Bethmann régime—the spring of 1911—that the Kaiser paid what turned out to be his last visit to England, to attend the unveiling of the Queen Victoria Memorial. He gives an animated and appreciative description of the ceremony and its attendant festivities, and of the warmth of his own reception. Ballin, who seems to have been in London at the time, formed the impression that the "Kaiser is now actually one of the most popular persons in England." As illustrating the kind of interests which were at this time occupying his mind, I may mention a conversation with which he honoured me one evening at Buckingham Palace after dinner.

He asked me if I had read the book to which I have already referred recently published by Hous-

ton Chamberlain, a German subject of English extraction, "The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century." I replied that I had dipped into it without being greatly impressed. He reproached me good-humouredly for my lack of insight, and, evidently regarding the book himself as in the nature of a new Gospel, he proceeded with much eloquence to descant on its central theme—the dominance of Race as the main factor in history. Chamberlain maintained, among other theses, that Christ was not a Jew, and that the Germans are the real "chosen people." The Emperor appeared to be pre-occupied by the Yellow Peril, and looked, as the only possible safeguard for civilisation against it, to the combined action of the White peoples. And among the White peoples the only ones which really counted were the Germanic races; for the Latins and the Slavs (whatever might have been their origin) he had nothing but contempt. He was already of the opinion which he repeats in his Memoirs: "The Germanic idea in all its splendour was first revealed and preached to the astonished German people by Chamberlain in his "Foundations of the Nineteenth Century." But, as is

proved by the collapse of the German people, this was in vain." *

I shall consider in another chapter the all-important topic of German naval expansion, for which (as we have seen) the Kaiser claims the main credit, and which was prosecuted with enthusiasm by Prince Bülow, and not without many waverings and misgivings by his successor. Indeed, in the critical year 1912, after the Haldane Mission to Berlin, the Kaiser tells us that Herr von Bethmann twice offered his resignation of the Chancellorship. It will be not inappropriate here to quote a significant passage, under the title "Retrospect," from Bethmann's "Reflections on the World War" written in 1919: "Sea power cast a spell that many a critic even of the smallest item in the budget could not resist. And in the country the further you were from the coast the brighter glittered the sea in the light of romance. The fleet was the pet of Germany, and seemed to embody the energies and enthusiasms of the nation. . . . The doubts of a small circle of experts as to whether we were on the

* In the course of the same talk the Emperor told me that not a single commissioned officer in his Army was a Jew. I felt constrained to point out that the Jews had their compensations; amongst other things, they had captured and controlled the larger part of the German press. He did not dissent.

right lines in building capital ships at all, could make no headway against a fanatical journalism wholly in the service of the prevailing policy. Questionings as to the grave international embarrassment caused us by our naval policy were shouted down by a boisterous agitation. . . . The direction of the fleet had lain for years in the hands of a man (i.e., Tirpitz), who had arrogated to himself a political authority far beyond his functions, and who had a lasting influence on the political point of view of an important circle. Whenever an issue arose between the naval authorities and the political administration, the public almost invariably supported the former." *

Side by side with this should be put some language which records the Kaiser's own personal views at the end of 1911. About that date his friend Ballin sent him a copy of an article in the *Westminster Gazette* entitled "Towards an Anglo-German Détente," which was returned with marginal notes, and a postscript in the Emperor's own hand.** Both the article and the Imperial comments upon it are well worth reading at length,

* "Reflections," pp. 90-91.

** It is set out in facsimile in an appendix to "Albert Ballin," p. 316, with a translation at p. 164.

in the light of subsequent events. I will only cite a few sentences from the Kaiser's postscript:

"Quite good, except for the ridiculous insinuation that we are aspiring after the hegemony in Central Europe. We simply *are* Central Europe. . . . To this the British object, because it absolutely knocks to pieces their theory of the 'Balance of Power,' i.e. their desire to be able to play off one European Power against another at their own pleasure, and because it would lead to the establishment of a united Continent—a contingency which they want to prevent at all costs."

A "united Continent" would of course have implied a subjugated France.

A year later (December, 1912) the Kaiser writes to Ballin: "I, as you know, have always looked upon Great Britain as an enemy in a military sense." *

* "Albert Ballin," p. 191.

CHAPTER VIII

DEVELOPMENT AND WORKING OF THE ENTENTE

THE first step had been taken when in April, 1904 (in the words of M. Poincaré *), "M. Delcassé signed with the British Government an agreement (with France) that removed the last causes of friction, and settled by mutual concessions the interests of the two nations in Morocco and Egypt, the precise points where they were most exposed to conflict." This agreement was the starting point of the *Entente Cordiale*. It was announced to the world, and debated in the Reichstag, where the Chancellor, Prince Bülow, expressly declared that "from the point of view of German interests we have nothing to object to in regard to it."

Sir Edward Grey, who took over the Foreign Office from Lord Lansdowne in December, 1905, carried on and developed the work begun by his predecessor, and our long-standing difficulties with

* "Origins of the War," p. 62.

Russia in Western and Central Asia were set at rest by the Anglo-Russian Convention of August, 1907. It is not too much to say that this agreement put an end, once and for all, to the "Russian Menace to India" which had haunted the minds of British statesmen and diplomatists—even of those who used the largest maps—for generations. It was dictated entirely by our own interests; it had no indirect objects: and in the debates upon it in Parliament Sir Edward Grey warmly repudiated the suggestion that it was aimed in any way at the "isolation" of Germany.*

We know now from the secret correspondence, unearthed after the Russian Revolution, which passed at the time between the German Emperor and the Czar, that in the interval between the conclusion of our Entente with France in 1904 and the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, and particularly during and after the Russo-Japanese War, "Willy" was assiduously urging "Nicky" to form a treaty of alliance with him against England; in the first instance behind the back of his French ally, who was later perforce to be drawn in. This intrigue came to a head in the "private" meeting

* House of Commons, 27th July, 1908.

of the two Imperial yachts, in July, 1905, at Bjoerkoe Sound, when the Kaiser presented the Czar with the text of the proposed Treaty, and induced him to sign it. The Czar when he got back home and informed his astonished Foreign Minister, Count Lamsdorff, of what he had done, was made to realise the folly and indeed the treachery into which he had been cajoled, and the Treaty (in M. Poincaré's words) "was allowed to remain buried in a pigeon hole, among the Czar's private papers."

When we had tried and failed (as will be shown hereafter) to come to an agreement with Germany as to Naval Expansion, we continued to attempt an understanding with her in other ways.

I shall hereafter describe the purpose and character of Lord Haldane's "mission" to Berlin in the early part of 1912. I confine myself therefore at this place to a single point, which can be conveniently dealt with here. In their earliest conversations, the German Chancellor sketched to Lord Haldane the following general formula, as one which would meet the views of the Imperial Government:

"1. The high contracting parties assure each other mutually of their desire of peace and friendship.

"2. They will not either of them make or prepare to make any (unprovoked) attack upon the other, or join in any combination or design against the other for purposes of aggression, or become party to any plan or naval or military enterprise alone or in combination with any other Power directed to such an end, and declare not to be bound by any such engagement.

"3. If either of the high contracting parties becomes entangled in a war with one or more Powers in which it cannot be said to be the aggressor, the other party will at least observe towards the Power so entangled a benevolent neutrality, and will use its utmost endeavor for the localisation of the conflict. If either of the high contracting parties is forced to go to war by obvious provocation from a third party, they bind themselves to enter into an exchange of views concerning their attitude in such a conflict.

"4. The duty of neutrality which arises out of the preceding article has no application in so far as it may not be reconcilable with existing agreements which the high contracting parties have already made.

"5. The making of new agreements which render it impossible for either of the parties to observe neutrality towards the other beyond what is provided by the preceding limitation is excluded in conformity with the provisions in article 2.

"6. The high contracting parties declare that they will do all in their power to prevent differences and misunderstandings arising between either of them and other Powers."

no mention of being dependent on Dual power

(Wolfe - p. 97)

As is pointed out in a statement issued by the British Foreign Office in 1915 "these conditions, although in appearance fair as between the parties, would have been grossly unfair and one-sided in their operation. Owing to the general position of the European Powers, and the treaty engagements by which they were bound, the result of articles 4 and 5 would have been that, while Germany in the case of a European conflict would have remained free to support her friends, this country would have been forbidden to raise a finger in defence of hers."

The formula was accordingly rejected by Sir E. Grey.

Negotiations were continued in London between Sir E. Grey and Count Metternich in March, 1912, and the British Cabinet eventually put forward the following formula:

"The two Powers (England and Germany) being naturally desirous of securing peace and friendship between them, England declares that she will neither make nor join in any unprovoked attack upon Germany. Aggression upon Germany is not the subject and forms no part of any treaty understanding or combination to which England

is now a party, nor will she become a party to anything that has such an object."

Germany was to give a reciprocal engagement.

This, however, was not enough for the Kaiser and his advisers. They required an absolute pledge of British neutrality if Germany should become involved in War, which, of course, would have enabled Germany whenever a favourable opportunity offered, to attack and crush France, while England looked on with tied hands, a passive and helpless spectator.

No British statesman could have consented to such an ignominious surrender of his Country's freedom of action in the future.

The failure to come to a general political agreement did not, however, prevent us from prosecuting negotiations with Germany in regard to the Bagdad railway, and to territorial and economic relations in Africa. The arrangements proposed did not consist (as Admiral von Tirpitz suggests) in offering to Germany territory that was not our own but which belonged to Portugal and other nations. Their purport is correctly described by Lord Haldane:* "All we did was to propose ex-

* "Before the War," p. 145.

changes with Germany of territory that was ours for territory that was hers: to undertake not to compete for the purchase of certain other territory that might come into the market, in consideration of a corresponding undertaking on her part; and to agree about zones within which each nation should distribute its industrial energies and give financial assistance to enterprise." So far as Portugal was concerned, the agreement was entirely contingent on her willingness to part with territory; and Sir E. Grey at the same time arranged with her for a renewal of the old standing Anglo-Portuguese Alliance.

The draft agreement between Great Britain and Germany was practically settled early in 1914, and one of the main reasons why it was not finally signed before the outbreak of the War, was that Sir Edward Grey insisted on its immediate publication, together with the renewed Anglo-Portuguese treaty, to the world; to which the Berlin Foreign Office demurred.

Herr von Bethmann, after saying that "in these negotiations England showed itself, as always, a hard bargainer but well disposed," adds that "the

policy of agreements on particular issues had proved itself practicable."

The Entente, I repeat, was never converted into an Alliance. While working cordially with France and Russia to secure the international equilibrium, we kept ourselves free to decide, when the occasion arose, whether we should or should not go to War. This was repeatedly stated in the House of Commons both by Sir E. Grey and myself. The formula agreed to in November, 1912, between the French Government and our own, the terms of which are set out at the end of this chapter, which bound us in the event of a danger to European peace, to consider jointly the steps to be taken, was (as M. Poincaré says) "simply hypothetical, and implied no firm obligation of reciprocal assistance. The British Cabinet did not feel itself able to contract a positive engagement without parliamentary sanction." "When," he adds, "the horizon darkened we had no certainty of British intervention."

"It was not," says Prince Bülow, "till the outbreak of War that the Triple Entente became a solid coalition. As late as April 24th, 1914, Baron Beyens, the Belgian Minister in Berlin, stated, in connection with the rumour that the Russian Am-

bassador in Paris, M. Iswolski, was to be transferred to London, that M. Iswolski would be able to convince himself there that public opinion in England had not the slightest desire to see England lose her freedom of action by a formal treaty which would bind her fate to that of Russia and France." *

This is abundantly corroborated by Sir E. Grey's conversation with M. Cambon on the 29th July, 1914.

A final and conclusive piece of evidence is to be found in the appeal which President Poincaré addressed to King George V as late as the 31st July, 1914, urging that Great Britain should make it clear that if conflict were forced by Germany and Austria we should not abstain from intervention. "Undoubtedly," writes the President, "our military and naval engagements leave your Majesty's Government entirely free, and in the letters exchanged in 1912 between Sir E. Grey and M. Paul Cambon, Great Britain and France are merely pledged the one to the other to conversations in the event of European tension, with a view to considering whether there is ground for common action."

* "Imperial Germany," p. 107.

Once the Entente was in being, the governments who were parties of it, naturally permitted and indeed encouraged their experts, military and naval, to compare notes, and to consider beforehand the possibilities which might arise in the event of a breach of the peace. This procedure began early in 1906, with the direct sanction of perhaps the most peace-loving of all British Prime Ministers, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. We had, indeed, a direct interest in the strategic aspects of an unprovoked German invasion of France: almost as direct as, and far more likely to become actual than, a German invasion of our own shores: a chimerical danger with which the great authority of Lord Roberts alarmed the public imagination, and which, in deference to him, received careful and protracted investigation in 1907-8 by the Committee of Imperial Defence under my chairmanship. The report of the Committee (which I shall quote later on) demonstrated that such an enterprise was out of the range of practical warfare. We now know that such a foolhardy adventure was never seriously contemplated by Admiral von Tirpitz and the acute minds of his General Staff. But it

was our plain duty to provide for every possible contingency.

As Lord Haldane says,* "There was no secret military convention; we entered into communications which bound us to do no more than study conceivable possibilities in a fashion which the German General Staff would look on as a mere matter of routine for a country the shores of which lay so near to those of France." M. Poincaré is equally explicit: "England," he says, "was bound neither to France nor Russia by any diplomatic pact. Her military General Staff was in unofficial relations with that of France for the purpose of considering an eventual programme of defence, but even in so far as concerned the possibility that France might be the victim of an unjustifiable attack, the British Government had entered into no engagement with her." **

In the Autumn of 1912, the general formula, already referred to, was agreed to between the British and French Governments. It was in these terms:

* "Before the War," p. 104.
** "Origin of the War," p. 71.

Sir E. Grey to M. Cambon 22nd Nov. 1912.

"From time to time in recent years the French and British naval and military experts have consulted together. It has always been understood that such consultation does not restrict the freedom of either Government to decide at any future time whether or not to assist the other by armed force. We have agreed that consultation between experts is not and ought not to be regarded as an engagement that commits either Government to action in a contingency that has not arisen and may never arise.

"You have, however, pointed out that if either Government had grave reason to expect an unprovoked attack by a third Power, it might become essential to know whether it could in that event depend upon the armed assistance of the other.

"I agree that if either Government had grave reason to expect an unprovoked attack by a third Power, or something that threatened the general peace, it should immediately discuss with the other whether both Governments should act together to prevent aggression and to preserve peace, and if so, what measure they would be prepared to take in common. If these measures involved action, the plans of the General Staffs would at once be taken into consideration, and the Governments would then decide what effect should be given to them." *

* See Appendix.

CHAPTER IX

THE PART OF GREAT BRITAIN IN THE ENTENTE

I HAVE described in the last chapter the development of the Entente and given some account of its practical working. The participation in it of Great Britain has been much criticised, both by those who are, and those who are not, acquainted with the actual facts. What were the alternatives? There were two and two only. One was that Great Britain should resume the policy of isolation. The other was that she should become a partner in one or other of the two Continental Alliances.

The policy of isolation had been tried and found wanting. For an insular Power, with a world-wide Empire, and itself the centre of international finance and exchange, that policy is foredoomed in the long run to failure. Such a Power cannot escape points of contact with other states and peoples, and points of contact are apt to develop into points of friction. It was isolation that made

possible such incidents as Pendjeh and Fashoda, the periodical scaremongering over Russian designs in Asia, and the perilous international situation in which we found ourselves during the Boer War. Each fresh misunderstanding had to be dealt with as it arose, and often in an atmosphere already overcharged with suspicion. Moreover, differences and controversies, small in themselves, had a tendency in such conditions to accumulate. To realise to what a volume they might in the course of years attain, it is only necessary to study the details of the Anglo-French Convention of 1904 and the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907. It was no doubt practical experience of the difficulties, and even the dangers, of isolation that in 1899 (as we have seen) led Mr. Chamberlain to press, and Lord Salisbury to dally with, the proposal for an Anglo-German alliance.

On the other hand, there was no proper place for Great Britain in either of the Continental Alliances. In truth, they were, both of them highly artificial combinations. In the early days of the Triple Alliance, Bismarck had taken care to reinsure himself with Russia. Italy (as I have pointed out above) had never been at home there,

and became more and more detached; concluding the Prinetti agreement with France in 1902; voting steadily against her German Ally at the Algeciras Conference in 1906; and in almost constant hot water with Austria over Balkan questions from 1912 onward. It was Italy which in effect vetoed the cynical Austrian scheme for the crushing of Serbia after the Treaty of Bucharest in 1913. Austria itself a geographical makeshift, had no independent corporate life, and was towed in the wake of Germany, which in turn with all its great resources, and still greater potentialities, had since the death of Bismarck lost the genius of leadership.

The Franco-Russian Alliance, based, it may almost be said, upon a negation, the common fear of Germany, was also in its essence an unnatural union, a *mariage de convenance* between Czarism and Democracy. It was a creature of necessity, of great service in maintaining the Continental equilibrium; but, important to us as was the friendship and goodwill of both its members, there was no reason, from the point of view either of British interests or of European peace, why we should join the partnership.

There was in those days no League of Nations: it required the harsh discipline of the War to convince the world of its necessity. The larger purposes of the Hague Conferences—disarmament in particular—were frustrated by divided counsels and by the veto of Germany. The situation was full of menacing possibilities from the piling up of armaments; Germany's new naval ambitions; the periodical emergence of embarrassing incidents like that of Morocco; the continuous counter-activities of Austria and Russia in the Balkans; the restlessness of the Balkan States themselves; the cloud of uncertainty which hung over the future of Turkey.

In such an atmosphere it seemed to us that the true policy of Great Britain was neither one of isolated detachment, nor of incorporation with one or another of the Alliances, defensive or offensive, of the Continental groups. We prepared, by the reconstruction of our army and large additions to our navy, for the worst eventualities. But we made it perfectly plain (as I have shown) to both France and Russia, from our relations with whom the Entente had removed all substantial causes of suspicion and mistrust, that, if and when the great issue of Peace and War should arise, we must have

our hands free, and be at full liberty to determine whether or not to intervene.

In such an attitude there was, of course, nothing provocative to the Triple Alliance. Germany indeed pressed more than once on our acceptance a formula of absolute neutrality, which was out of the question. All that we could reasonably be expected to offer we gave.

The Balkan troubles of 1912-13 afford a practical illustration of Sir Edward Grey's conception of the part which Great Britain ought to play in situations where no direct British interest was involved, but the general peace of Europe was in serious jeopardy.

It is not worth while to go at length into the tedious details of the two Balkan Wars, nor, in the conflict of evidence, is it possible to say with precision to what extent the strings of the combatant states were pulled from Vienna and St. Petersburg respectively. There is no doubt, however, that Bulgaria was the protégé of Austria, and Serbia of Russia, and there was imminent danger of the two Powers being drawn into active participation in the fray. To prevent this possibility was Sir E. Grey's constant preoccupation, and that it was in

fact prevented was largely, if not mainly, due to him. "The most potent factor in the preservation of peace between the Powers," writes Dr. Schmitt, "was unquestionably the moderating influence of Sir Edward Grey. . . . He revived the European Concert, through a Conference of Ambassadors in London, and with their assistance skilfully adjusted the conflicting claims of the Powers directly interested in the Balkans." It should be noted that throughout the deliberations, he not only showed no bias in favour of Russia, but on more than one critical occasion (for instance, the affair of Scutari) he backed up the Austrian contentions. It is fair to add that from the representative of Germany, Prince Lichnowsky, he received effective support.

Sir E. Grey's speech in the House of Commons, 12th Aug., 1913, and Mr. Bonar Law's comments upon it, are so important that the substance of both is set out in the Appendix.

The Balkans remained a fertile seed-plot of intrigue and danger, but the conflict had for the time been localised and circumscribed, and the world was saved from the immeasurable calamity of a European War.

It was with this happy precedent still fresh in

the memory, that two years later we strove to solve a new crisis by the application of the same machinery. The trouble had again arisen in the Balkan area: the Powers directly interested were again Austria and Russia: the rest had no concern of their own in the quarrel. The experience of 1912-13 had shown that, given a genuine desire to preserve the peace, the groupings of the great States might be superseded, or even for the time obliterated, by concerted action under the supreme stress of a common emergency.

But it was not to be.

CHAPTER X

NAVAL EXPANSION

I SHALL take as the best preface I can find to this chapter, some words used by Prince Bülow in his book on "Imperial Germany":

"During the first ten years after the introduction of the Navy Bill of 1897, and while our shipbuilding was in its infancy, an English Government, ready to go to any lengths, could have made short work of our development as a Sea Power, and rendered us harmless before our claws had grown at sea." "England had missed the right moment."

Nothing is more true; if our policy had been to "isolate" Germany, we could "encircle" and possibly at the cost of a European War—have strangled the German Navy in its cradle.

"The Fleet that we have built since 1897," writes Prince Bülow, "and which though far inferior to England's has made us the second Sea Power of the world, enabled us to support our interests everywhere with all the weight of our reputation as a

Great Power. . . . Certainly it was a predominantly defensive rôle that we assigned to our fleet. It is self-understood, however, that in serious international conflicts this defensive rôle might be extended."

The Kaiser describes with much self-complacency the stages by which his navy was transformed from an insignificant into a formidable and even menacing war-machine.

In this chapter I shall present a summarised narrative of the process of expansion.

In 1888 when William II succeeded to the throne, the German fleet consisted of 27 ironclads firing 160 guns, 23 cruisers and a *personnel* of 16,995 officers and men; and the estimates only amounted to £2,300,000. In 1891-2 the estimates had risen to £4,750,000 in pursuance of a naval programme drafted in 1888-9. But this programme was not fully carried out and the estimates were reduced in subsequent years by the Reichstag. Finally in 1897 when Admiral von Hollmann was defeated both in the Budget Committee and the Reichstag, he resigned, and was succeeded by Admiral von Tirpitz.

The only progress that had been made in this

period lay in the reconstitution of the Navy Department as a separate Ministry under a Secretary of State. The Kaiser says truly that from his point of view the "twelve previous years" had been wasted. In Admiral von Hollmann's words "the navy was slowly dying of old age." There were in commission only 8 battleships, the largest of them of 9,874 tons, 6 others which were obsolescent, and 19 small armoured cruisers. The personnel was about 25,000.

Public opinion was still torpid: the Reichstag was recalcitrant; the Parliamentary leaders, especially Richter, were contemptuous; and it was necessary that a "great movement should be engineered among the people." For this purpose an "energetic propaganda" was set on foot, through a "well-organised and well-directed press." The Kaiser himself contributed in a speech at Cologne (4 April, 1897) in which he used the characteristic phrase: "Neptune with the trident is a symbol that we have new tasks to perform . . . and that trident must be in our hands."

On 10th April, 1898, the new Navy Law was passed. The Law was justified, in an explanatory memorandum, on the ground that the navy had

actually weakened in recent years, that the Empire possessed colonies which needed protection, and that its growing trade not only made it vulnerable at sea, but increased the risks of complications with foreign countries.

Its capital feature was the establishment of a fleet of fixed size and character with automatic replacement: as the Kaiser says, "the make-up of the navy, like that of the army, was to be settled by law once and for all."

A programme was laid down for completion in six years—that is before the end of the financial Year 1903-4. The establishment included in this programme was as follows:

(a) Ready for use

1	Fleet flagship	
2	squadrons each of 8 battleships	
2	divisions each of 4 armoured coastships	
6	large cruisers	As Scouts of the Home Battle Fleet
16	small "	
3	large cruisers	For foreign service
10	small "	

(b) As material reserve

2	battleships
3	large cruisers
4	small cruisers

The requirements in torpedo craft, school-ships and training ships were not laid down.

The period fixed for replacement was for battleships 25 years, for large cruisers 20 years and small cruisers 15 years.

In 1898 the relative strength of the principal European navies was as follows:

	Britain	France	Russia	Italy	Germany
Battleships					
First-class	29	14	6	8	4
Second-class ...	7	8	4	2	4
Third-class	18	7	5	3	6
Total Battleships..	54	29	15	13	14
Coast-defence ships	14	16	13	..	18
Cruisers					
First-class	23	8	6	..	1
Second-class ...	47	13	3	5	3
Third-class	34	9	1	9	9
Total Cruisers	104	30	10	14	13
Torpedo Gunboats	34	19	8	15	4

The establishment laid down in the Law of 1898 was far from being excessive, either with reference to Germany's naval interests, or the relative strength of other fleets. The new departure

aroused no apprehension in this country. So far is this from being true that it was in the autumn of 1899 that overtures were made (as we have seen) by English statesmen like Mr. Chamberlain to pave the way to an Anglo-German alliance.

Early in 1899 Admiral von Tirpitz said in the Budget Committee of the Reichstag: "I declare expressly that in no quarter has the intention to submit a new navy plan in any way been manifested: that on the contrary, in all quarters concerned, the firmest intention exists to carry out the Navy Law and to observe the limits therein laid down." In spite of this emphatic declaration, before the end of the year the German Government had announced the Bill which became the Law of 14th June, 1900.

In the interval the South African War had broken out and the *Bundesrath* and two other German steamers had been seized by the British naval authorities. The account which the Kaiser gives of the reception of the news by himself, Prince Bülow and Admiral von Tirpitz, throws an interesting light on their motives and methods. On his own confession, Anglophobia was deliberately stirred up and exploited in connection with the

"outrage," for the purpose of repealing and enlarging the law of 1898. And at the same time the Emperor was taking credit with the British Government for his friendliness, by revealing his refusal of the allied Russian and French proposal for joint intervention in the South African War, and even (as he says) by supplying Lord Roberts with a plan of campaign.

The memorandum attached to the Navy Bill of 1900 defined its object:

"To protect the Empire's sea trade and colonies, in view of present circumstances only one method can avail —Germany must have a battle fleet so strong that even the adversary possessed of the greatest sea-power will attack it only with grave risk to himself.

"For our purpose it is not absolutely necessary that the German battle fleet should be as strong as that of the *greatest naval Power:* for as a rule a great *Naval Power* will not be able to direct his whole striking force upon us. But even if it should succeed in meeting us with considerable superiority of strength the defeat of a strong German fleet would so substantially weaken the enemy that in spite of a victory he might have obtained his own position in the world would no longer be secured by an adequate fleet."

These generalities were reduced to concrete terms in the Reichstag by Admiral von der Goltz, an official exponent of Germany's naval policy:

"Let us consider the case of a war with England. In spite of what many people think there is nothing improbable in it owing to the animosity which exists in our country towards England and to the sentiments of the British nation towards all continental powers and in particular against Germany. . . . The opinion is generally held in this country that any resistance against England at sea would be impossible and that all our naval preparations are but wasted efforts. It is time that this childish fear which would put a stop to all our progress should be pulled up by the roots and destroyed. . . . The maritime superiority of Great Britain, overwhelming now, will certainly remain considerable in the future, but she is compelled to scatter her forces all over the world. In the event of war in home waters the greater part of the foreign squadrons would no doubt be recalled: but that would be a matter of time and then all the stations overseas could not be abandoned. On the other hand the German fleet, though much smaller, can remain concentrated in European waters. With the increases about to be made it will be in a position to measure its strength with the ordinary British naval forces in home waters."

Influenced by these arguments the Reichstag assented to the new Navy Law which in its final form set up the following establishment for the fleet:

The Battle Fleet: 2 fleet flagships
4 squadrons each of 8 battleships
8 large cruisers for scouting purposes
24 small cruisers for scouting purposes

Foreign Fleet:	3 large cruisers
	10 small cruisers
Reserve:	4 battleships
	3 large cruisers
	4 small cruisers

An attached schedule provided for the replacement of 17 battleships and 39 cruisers during the years 1901-17 inclusive. The effect of the new law was to increase the single battle fleet of the 1898 Law into two battle fleets with three of the four squadrons permanently in commission.

With the enlargement of the programme the policy of naval construction also changed. The new ships both in displacement and armament marked a great advance on the type of vessel which Germany had hitherto built. "These ships," say Messrs. Hurd and Castle, "really represented the entrance of Germany upon the high seas as a first class naval power possessing vessels fit to lie in the line and to fight the men-of-war under any foreign flag."

The Law of 1900 which laid down a programme for 17 years was first amended by the Act of June 5th, 1906, by which amendment the Foreign Service Fleet was increased by 5 large cruisers and the

reserve by one cruiser. It however increased the normal naval expenditure by one-third.

On 10th February, 1906, the *Dreadnought* had been launched. It was the product of the experience gained in the Russo-Japanese War. The change in design which it inaugurated was inevitable.

The advent of the *Dreadnought* produced consternation. The German authorities, whose foresight the Kaiser extols, were quite unprepared for any such development, and from the summer of 1905 until July, 1907, the keel of not a single new German battleship was laid down.

A further amendment of the Law of 1900 was made on 6th April, 1908, whereby the replacement-period for old vessels was reduced from 25 years to 20 years. The effect of this amendment was to increase the annual programme to four capital ships.*

The new Law was the German response to the offer of Great Britain to reduce the competition in naval armaments.

In July, 1906, the British Government had an-

* "It was tantamount to asking for the cost of 3 new ships of the line" ("Albert Ballin," p. 137).

nounced its intention to cut down battleship construction by 25 per cent, destroyer construction by 60 per cent and submarine construction by 33 per cent. On March 2nd, 1907, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, then Prime Minister, published an article in the *Nation,* pointing out that British sea-power was recognised universally as non-aggressive; offering to reduce naval armaments even further if other nations adopted the same policy; and urging strongly that the subject should not be excluded from the approaching Hague Conference.* An official communication on these lines was sent to all the Naval Powers. In April the German Chancellor replied in the Reichstag. "The German Government cannot participate in a discussion which, according to their conviction, is unpractical even if it does not involve risk." It was through the deliberate obstruction of Germany that the Hague Conference failed in its main purposes, and that no concerted and effective effort was made for European disarmament. The Kaiser himself told Sir Charles Hardinge that the whole thing was the "greatest nonsense."

* This article will be found *in extenso* in Appendix E.

The amended Law of 1908 made it clear that unless British ship-building was increased Germany might gain a superiority in capital ships in 1914. In consequence I declared on 29th March, 1909, in the House of Commons that Great Britain would not permit her supremacy to be challenged. Our position was at the same time clearly stated by Sir Edward Grey: "Our navy is to us what the German army is to Germany. To have a strong navy would increase their prestige, their diplomatic influence, their power of protecting their commerce; but it is not the matter of life and death to them that it is to us." *

We accordingly laid down 8 Capital ships in 1909.

Under the Amendment of 1908 German construction would have fallen to 2 ships in 1911 but at the end of 1911 a new Amendment was brought forward, which became law on 14th June, 1912, and which provided for the Battle Fleet of

1 fleet flagship
5 squadrons of 8 battleships each
12 large cruisers } As scouts.
30 small cruisers }

* House of Commons, 29th March, 1909.

and the Foreign Service Fleet of

8 large cruisers
10 small cruisers.

This meant an addition of 3 battleships and 2 armoured cruisers. There was also provision for the construction of 6 submarines annually, 72 in all. The most significant feature of the new law is the creation and maintenance in full commission of a third battle squadron of 8 battleships.

Mr. Churchill dealt with the effect of the new Law in his speech on 22nd July, 1912:

"The main feature of that Law is not the increase in the new construction of capital ships though that is an important feature. The main feature is the increase in the striking force of ships of all classes which will be available, immediately available, at all seasons of the year. A third squadron of 8 battleships will be created and maintained in full commission as part of the active battle fleet. Whereas according to the unamended Law the active battle fleet consists of 17 battleships, 4 battle or large armoured cruisers and 12 small cruisers: in the near future that active fleet will consist of 25 battleships, 8 battle or large armoured cruisers and 18 small cruisers: and whereas owing to the system of recruitment which prevails in Germany the German fleet is less fully mobile during the winter months, it will, through the operation of this law be not only increased in strength but rendered much more readily available. . . . Taking a

general view of the effect of the Law nearly four-fifths of the entire German Navy will be maintained in full personnel commission—that is to say instantly and constantly ready for war. Such a proportion is remarkable, and, so far as I am aware, finds no example in the previous practise of any modern naval power."

The Navy Law of 1912 was passed after the failure of the conversations of that year, initiated by Lord Haldane, with which I shall deal in a separate chapter.

Without going into technical details the general effect of the new situation created by the Law, so far as battleships were concerned, was this (assuming the programme to be carried out):

	Battleships:	
	Ready for service	*Total on mobilisation*
Germany	25	38
Great Britain ..	49	57 (rising to 65)

This will be a convenient place to deal with the question: What was the real object of these successive developments in the German Navy, of ever increasing scope, and culminating in the Law of 1912? Can the facts be reconciled with the official theory that expansion upon such a scale, and at such a rate, was forced upon Germany by the growth of her foreign trade, the multiplication of

her mercantile marine, and the duty of protecting her accumulating interests, territorial and otherwise, over the seas?

The best answer that can be given to this inquiry, is I think to be found in an address delivered by Mr. Churchill to the Committee of Imperial Defence on July 11th, 1912, with the object of giving full and confidential information to the Prime Minister of Canada, Mr. (now Sir Robert) Borden and four of his colleagues in the Canadian Cabinet, whom I had invited to the meeting:

"I should like," said Mr. Churchill, "to point out that the repeated increases occurred quite irrespective of what we had done ourselves. In fact the most notable increase, that of 1906, occurred at a period when we had deliberately decided to try and set an example of checking naval competition by restricting our own programme of construction, both in that year and the year after.

"The ultimate scale of the German fleet is of the most formidable character.

"Of course it is quite true that according to the German Navy Law, as a great many German speakers on the subject have always said, the German fleet does not exist in order to be a menace to

the British fleet, and it does not contemplate anything of that character—it only exists for the protection of German trade and of German Colonies. We are speaking here without the reserves which are necessary in public utterance, and I am bound to say, speaking on behalf of the Admiralty, that we find it very difficult to reconcile such statements with truth—very difficult indeed. The whole character of the German fleet shows that it is designed for aggressive and offensive action of the largest possible character in the North Sea or the North Atlantic—action, according to the Memorandum accompanying their first Bill, against the strongest naval Power at some moment when that Power will not be able, owing to some duty which it may have to discharge to its Colonies or to some other part of the Empire, to keep all its forces concentrated to meet the blow. The structure of the German battleships shows clearly that they are intended for attack and for fleet action. They are not a cruiser fleet designed to protect Colonies and commerce all over the world. They have been preparing for years, and are continuing to prepare, on an ever larger scale a fleet which, from its structure and character, can be proved by naval experts to have

the central and supreme object of drawing out a line of battle for a great trial of strength in the North Sea or in the ocean. I will not go into technical details, but the position of the guns, the armament, the way the torpedo tubes are placed—all these things enable naval experts to say that this idea of sudden and aggressive action on the greatest scale against a great modern naval Power, is undoubtedly the guiding principle of German naval policy. When you go to the smaller types of vessels, the same principle can be traced. In their torpedo boat destroyers, which they call torpedo boats, speed has been the principle essentially that they have gone upon, and that they have developed. We on our part have developed gun power and strength to a greater extent, because our destroyers would play the more defensive rôle of protecting our battle fleet against the attack of the enemy's destroyers. Their torpedo boats are undoubtedly designed with a view to developing an attack upon the great ships of the navy that they may be opposed to, whereas ours have in view the object of destroying the torpedo craft of the enemy which would be trying to make an attack. That again is a very significant fact. Now we come to the

submarine. If there ever was a vessel in the world whose services to the defensive will be great, and which is a characteristic weapon for the defence, it is the submarine. But the German development of that vessel, from all the information we can obtain shows that it is intended to turn even this weapon of defence into one of offence, that is to say, they are building not the smaller classes which will be useful for the defence of their somewhat limited coast-line, but the large classes which would be capable of sudden operation at a great distance from their base across the sea. So I think I am justified in saying that the German fleet, whatever may be said about it, exists for the purpose of fighting a great battle in the North Sea, both with battleships and with all ancillary vessels, against some other great Naval Power which is not referred to by them.

"We have at present, I was going to say, two safety signals which we watch very carefully—I hope I am not doing wrong in speaking quite plainly about these things. First of all, we see that in the winter the German fleet is largely demobilised, owing to the fact that they are full up with their recruits; consequently, in the winter the

strain is relaxed, we are able to send our fleet away to refresh itself on the coast of Spain, and, generally speaking, we get repairs done on a larger scale when the strain is abated. Another indication which we have of security is when we see some of their great vessels of the newer type, the *Oldenburg,* the *Moltke,* or the *Von der Tann,* on the Baltic side of the Kiel Canal, because they cannot come through the canal at present, and we know that if any great enterprise were on foot it would be very unlikely that units of the greatest consequence would be left on the wrong side of the canal, whence they would have to make a great detour to come round. Unfortunately both these safety signals are going to be extinguished in the immediate future; the deepening of the Kiel Canal, which is to be accomplished in two years' time, will enable the greatest vessels to pass through it in the same way as other vessels can now pass through. In addition, as regards the immunity which so far we have enjoyed in the winter, that too will be destroyed by the development of the new German Navy Law, the effect of which is to put slightly less than four-fifths of their Fleet permanently

into full commission, that is to say, in the category of ships instantly ready for action."

Mr. Pelletier, one of the Canadian Ministers, put the pertinent question:

"Is there any indication that Germany will increase her naval forces and her coaling stations abroad in order to carry out the assumption that she is only protecting her colonies?"

Mr. Churchill: No, there is not. As a matter of fact, the Admiralty would not view with deep concern the development by Germany of oversea possessions. On the contrary, if they were acquired in a fair manner without trampling upon weaker Powers, we should be rather glad to see what is now concentrated dissipated. New oversea possessions are, to some extent, a hostage to the stronger naval Power, and might easily relieve the tension. It is no part, if I understand him aright, of Sir Edward Grey's policy to stand in the way of Germany acquiring legitimate possessions abroad. On the contrary, it would really relieve the naval situation.

Sir Edward Grey: We have been endeavouring to make that clear.

Mr. Asquith: We are not what they call "keep-

ing her out of her place in the sun." On the contrary.

* * *

In 1913 Mr. Churchill proposed a "naval holiday." This suggestion was also rejected.

Two questions arise in connection with the growth of the German Navy:

1. How far the Kaiser is entitled to credit for its creation?
2. To what extent the naval agitation for which he was largely responsible created the war atmosphere?

1. The Kaiser himself admits that all his efforts were fruitless up to 1898; he deplores "the twelve wasted years." During these years his flamboyant speeches had little effect either on the Reichstag or on German public opinion. The chief of Admiralty, Admiral von Hollmann, made no impression on the Reichstag; indeed his proposals were frequently rejected. It was only when Admiral von Tirpitz became director of German naval policy that any progress was made.

Instead of the piecemeal proposals mainly for cruiser construction which were put forward from 1888 to 1898, Admiral von Tirpitz adopted a fixed

and consistent policy. He inaugurated the Navy League. He initiated an elaborate system of propaganda. And he handled the Reichstag with consummate skill. While the Kaiser made rhetorical speeches, and had only vague general ideas about the importance of sea power, Admiral von Tirpitz devised and carried out a practical policy of naval expansion.

2. For the purpose of influencing public opinion, the Kaiser himself offers evidence that Anglophobia was deliberately stimulated.

The explosion which took place when the *Daily Telegraph* interview was published in 1908 is under these conditions not surprising. Having by his own policy fanned the flames of Anglophobia, it was not to be wondered at that his subjects could not understand his professions of friendship for England which he admitted were not shared by the majority of the German people. While he was fomenting hatred against England, it became increasingly difficult to preserve good relations between the two peoples.

A necessary result of the rapid and menacing expansion of the German fleet was (as Admiral Tirpitz records with complacency) the concentra-

tion of the main British naval force in the North Sea, and the withdrawal of our battleships from the Mediterranean, whither the French removed their heavy ships. It was only in this way that we could provide the ships and the men to form our Third Battle Squadron. We still left a strong force in the Mediterranean to guard our interests there, and (as Mr. Churchill wrote to me at the time, August, 1912): "If France did not exist, we should make no other disposition of our forces." The same was true *mutatis mutandis* of France.

The result of the new Naval dispositions made by the two countries in 1912, was to leave the Channel and Atlantic ports of France undefended by any adequate French naval force. There was no formal stipulation between France and Great Britain that in the case of unprovoked attack, we should supply the necessary naval force for their defence; still less, of course, that we should regard such an attack as a *casus belli* with ourselves. There were, as I have said before, neither naval nor military "compacts." But France undoubtedly felt that she could calculate, in such a contingency, upon our vetoing any attack by sea upon her Northern and Western coasts, which were practically denuded of

Naval protection by her concentration in the Mediterranean. And this is what, in the event, actually happened. At a critical phase of the negotiations in August, 1914, we let the French Government know that (without in any way committing ourselves to go to war on the side of France) we should not allow the German Fleet to come down the Channel to attack her Northern ports. This intimation was communicated without delay by Prince Lichnowsky to his Government. In the "Reminiscences," just published of the late Count von Moltke, who was the Chief of the German Staff, what followed is described in these terms:

> "On the day before mobilisation (i.e. of the German army) a dispatch arrived from London, in which it was stated that England had given an undertaking to France to protect her against German attack from the sea against her northern coast. The Kaiser asked me for my opinion, and I said that we could unhesitatingly give a guarantee not to attack the northern coast of France if England would, on this understanding, agree to remain neutral."

It is perfectly clear that neither the non-dispersal of our Fleet at the end of July, 1914, nor our promise to France to keep the German Navy out of the Channel, were regarded in Berlin as

acts of hostility. It was still hoped and believed that England would remain neutral.

A word may here be said as to the Nemesis which lay in wait for the most costly and formidable development of the *Weltpolitik*. What became of this vast collection of gigantic instruments of destruction when war at last broke out? For all practical belligerent purposes, they were from the early days of the War sealed up in their Home Ports. For a few months, stray German cruisers appeared here and there upon the High Seas, and attempted to harass our commerce; but their activity completely collapsed as soon as the meteoric career of the *Emden* was brought to a close, and the *Königsberg* was bottled up in an East African river. The only successful naval action fought by the Germans—an affair of cruisers—was that at Coronel (November, 1914) which gave Von Spee momentary command of the South Pacific coast: a result which was reversed a month later by Sturdee's crushing victory at the Falklands. From the end of 1914, the only serious attempts to challenge the command of the sea were the battle-cruiser engagement off Heligoland in January, 1915, brought on by Hipper, to his own discomfiture; and the much

discussed battle of Jutland (31st May, 1916) which the Kaiser does not hesitate to claim as a brilliant German Victory. "That battle," he writes, "would have meant annihilation for England, if the Reichstag, up to 1900, had not refused all proposals for strengthening the Navy. Those twelve lost years were destined never to be retrieved." The battle of Jutland was fought with admirable tactical skill by the German Admiral Von Scheer, whose final escape was largely helped by weather conditions. But escape it was, and nothing better. There can be no doubt that this—their only experience—of naval fighting on a large scale under modern conditions profoundly depressed, if it did not destroy, the *moral* of the German fleet. They never tried conclusions again.

There was a less spectacular but much more formidable function, which the German Navy wholly failed to perform in the opening days of the War. The British Expeditionary force was allowed to cross the Channel—an operation which took the best part of nine days—absolutely unmolested, and without the loss of a dog. A still grosser error—for the task was far easier—was the failure of the Germans to attempt to intercept the French

transports which were bringing over large bodies of troops from North Africa. This was done without any mishap almost under the eyes of the afterwards notorious *Goeben*.

So far as sea warfare is concerned, Germany was very soon reduced to the use of the mine and the submarine, and the most dramatic, if not the most destructive, of her exploits upon the ocean was the torpedoing of the passenger-ship *Lusitania* with the loss of 1100 civilian lives.

The remains of the great German Navy now lie at the bottom of Scapa Flow.

* * *

It was not without difficulty that Parliament was persuaded to assent to the large Naval increases which were submitted to it both by Mr. McKenna and Mr. Churchill. Economists, lovers of peace, promoters of social reform, advocates of reduced taxation, not unnaturally chafed at the alarming and continuous growth in the expenditure on Naval armaments. It is no secret now that there were from time to time serious controversies on the subject in the Cabinet, particularly in the autumn and winter of 1913-14, when it was only after protracted discussion that sanction was given to the Estimates

for the year 1914-15. They amounted to £52½ millions—an increase of some £20 millions on the annual expenditure on the Navy only a few years before. I shall say more about this aspect of the matter when I come to deal with Pre-War Preparation.

Taken as a whole, for there were undoubtedly miscalculations, most of which it would have been difficult for human foresight to avoid, the policy which our Admiralty pursued before the War was abundantly justified by the event. From the first week of the War to the last Great Britain never lost the command of the sea. This was true even of the time when the unrestricted submarine campaign was at its height, and was causing heavy losses to our mercantile marine. It was during that phase of the struggle that the gigantic contribution in men and material made by the United States was transported across the Atlantic in its integrity. People are apt to forget that long after Nelson had secured our naval supremacy at Trafalgar serious damage continued to be done by roving French cruisers to our sea-borne commerce.

It was the control of the sea by the British Navy

which fed and equipped the Allies, by successive stages drained the life-blood of the enemy, and won the War.

Supplementary Note

Ballin was Germany's greatest expert in all matters connected with maritime commerce, and it may be well to cite here some passages in a letter of his written to a "gentleman in the Kaiser's entourage" in 1917, after an experience of some months of unrestricted submarine warfare:*

"Let me repeat, the starvation of Great Britain is impossible; because, in addition to her own harvests, she only needs from twelve to fifteen thousand tons of cereals every day, and these she can, if necessary, always obtain at night time through her Channel service, via Spain and France. Even this necessity will hardly arise, because two medium-sized steamers are sufficient to carry the fifteen thousand tons and things would have to be very bad, indeed, if these did not succeed in reaching a British port.

"You will be doing a good work if you can per-

* "Albert Ballin," pp. 268-9.

suade people at headquarters to abandon their belief that Great Britain can be starved to submission. Unfortunately their other belief, viz., that we can cut off her supplies of ore and pit-props, will also have to be abandoned.

"Certainly, the achievements of our submarines have been amazing. At their present rate they will enormously diminish the British tonnage figures, and raise the hatred of everything German to boiling point; but they will not, unfortunately, lead to such an end of the war as our Pan-Germans desire. It is a thousand pities!

"When the submarine problem began to assume practical shape, I pointed out to the Chief of the Admiralty Staff that, to be successful, the submarine war must be brief; that its principal object was not to sink a large number of ships, but to produce such a feeling of alarm in neutral countries as to prevent them from risking their ships (1) because of the great value of tonnage immediately after the war, (2) because of the impossibility of finding crews, and (3) because of the insurance difficulty. These conditions of success were, indeed, realised during the first four weeks; but since

that time people, as I had predicted, have got used to the danger. The crews are coming forth again, the insurance companies issue their policies again, and the ships are put to sea again."

CHAPTER XI

MOROCCO

THE economic and political status of Morocco was for many years (1905-1911) a smouldering, international firebrand, which after intervals of quiescence, leapt from time to time into flame. It was set alight by the Kaiser's uncalled for and unwelcome visit to Tangier in 1905, which he declares was forced upon him against his own judgment by the peremptory counsel of Prince Bülow.

"I gave in" (he says) "with a heavy heart." "The visit" (he adds sardonically) "met with a certain amount of friendly participation by Italian and Southern French anarchists, rogues and adventurers. A lot of Spaniards stood upon a small square, amid waving banners and loud cries; these (according to a police official who accompanied us) were an assembly of Spanish Anarchists." Nothing daunted by this unpromising environment, the Emperor proceeded to deliver a harangue of a singularly provocative kind, in which (I quote Prince

Bülow's narrative) "he defended the independence and sovereignty of Morocco in unequivocal language. *The demands of Germany to be consulted about Moroccan affairs were thus announced to the world.*" The Kaiser's retrospective comment is worth recording: "Thus, even as far back as that, I ran the risk, through the Tangier visit forced upon me, of getting blamed for the unchaining of a World War."

In the first stages of the embroilment with France, which naturally and necessarily followed, Germany gained a temporary though partial success in the downfall of M. Delcassé, and the assembling of the Algeciras Conference. Prince Bülow boasts that he thus not only "bolted the door against the attempts of France to compass the 'Tunification of Morocco,'" but "also provided a bell we could ring at any time should France show any similar tendencies again."

Delcassé, who was one of the authors of the Anglo-French Entente, had come to be regarded in Berlin as an obnoxious and even dangerous figure, and the vendetta with which he was pursued in Germany was without doubt inspired and stimulated in official quarters. It was a campaign of

intimidation, by which the then French Prime Minister, M. Rouvier allowed himself to be browbeaten. He accepted Delcassé's proffered resignation. Princess Bülow, the Chancellor's wife, was reported to have said: "We did not ask for Delcassé's head; it was offered to us."

Here it will not be out of place to dispose of the Kaiser's suggestion—for it is put forward rather by way of suggestion than of direct assertion—that at some time in the summer of 1905, England had offered France, in case of war, to land 100,000 men in Holstein and to seize the Kaiser Wilhelm Canal. The only authority cited is a statement in the Paris *Matin* (October 9, 1905) that M. Delcassé had reported such an offer to the French Council of Ministers. There is no other evidence that M. Delcassé ever said anything of the kind, and on the 14th October the Havas Agency was "authorised to declare that the accounts which have appeared in the newspapers as to the incidents which accompanied the fall of M. Delcassé, and particularly the details of the Ministerial Council, are inaccurate."

I have made careful inquiries, with the result that I am able to state on the best authority that no

such offer was ever made by the British Foreign Office or by or on behalf of the British Government. Nor, of course, is there a word of truth in the Kaiser's further statement, that "this English offer was repeated once more, later on, with the suggestion that it be affirmed in writing." That he should retail, as though it were history, an idle piece of Paris gossip, is another illustration of the reckless credulity which was and is one of his besetting sins.

A few years later the "bell" was rung again, when (July, 1911) the *Panther,* a German gunboat, was sent to the port of Agadir, in the ostensible defence of some non-existent German interests against imaginary perils. The Kaiser declares that again he protested, but allowed himself once more to be overruled by his Chancellor: this time Bethmann-Hollweg, who, he tells us, had "developed a strong and growing inclination towards domination." The result was disappointing; for in the bargaining which ensued, by the arrangements ultimately made between France and Germany at Berlin in November of that year, after the world had barely escaped a European War, Germany, in effect, surrendered anything she had gained at Algeciras, and by the subsequent experiment of a

Moroccan condominium with France, in return for a slice of Franco-Congolese territory.* M. Poincaré observes that the Treaty of November, 1911, satisfied neither France nor Germany. Germany certainly continued to foment unrest in Morocco.

The Moroccan "policy" of the Kaiser during these six years was one of alternating bluster and blunder: it unsettled Europe; it bred an infinity of bad international blood; it twice brought the Powers to the verge of a general war; and in the end it was profitless to Germany. The methods of Bülow and Bethmann, who in turn played a conspicuous part in this sorry business, and who had both graduated in the Bismarckian School, would have brought a blush to the cheeks of their Great Preceptor.**

But, for my present purpose, the importance of the various phases of the Morocco affair does not concern the rights and wrongs of the Franco-German controversy, but its bearing on Anglo-German relations.

When the news of the despatch of the *Panther*

* See the book of M. Caillaux, who was Prime Minister of France in 1911: "Agadir: Ma Politique exterieure"—Paris: Michel, 1919.

** M. Caillaux's epithets for the German diplomacy in this matter —*"pedante, hargneuse, et tatillonne"*—are not too severe.

to Agadir was announced by Count Metternich to Sir E. Grey, the Cabinet was at once summoned, with the result that the Ambassador was informed (on July 5th) that the British Government could not "disinterest" themselves in Morocco and awaited a disclosure of German intentions. How could we "disinterest" ourselves, in view of our being parties to the Anglo-French agreement of 1904 and to the Act of Algeciras? The more so, if this new departure on the part of Germany portended an intention, whether by force or by bargaining, to establish a naval base on the Atlantic coast. The suggestion that between 1908 and 1911 we had been deliberately making mischief and promoting friction between French and German relations in Morocco is without any foundation in fact. Nothing could have been further from our policy or our interests.

No notice was taken for over a fortnight of our communication by the German Government, whose intention and objective was still veiled in obscurity. In these circumstances it seemed to be necessary to make it clear that we were not to be ignored. Accordingly, at the annual dinner given by the Lord Mayor to the Bankers of the City of

London (on July 21st), the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Lloyd George), who is on this occasion always the principal guest, took advantage of the opportunity to deal with the external situation. The general purport and tenor of what he said had been previously submitted to and approved by Sir Edward Grey and myself. There was nothing menacing or provocative in his language. He dealt strongly upon the importance of preserving not only peace but international goodwill. "But," he added, "if a situation were to be forced upon us in which peace could only be preserved . . . by allowing Britain to be treated where her interests were vitally affected as if she were of no account in the cabinet of nations, then I say emphatically that peace at that price would be a humiliation intolerable for a great country like ours to endure."

This speech produced a *crise des nerfs* at Berlin. Stiff interviews took place between Sir E. Grey and Count Metternich, who declined in response to such a "menace" to give any explanation on the part of his Government. At the same time German public opinion was further excited by reports industriously circulated that the British Government was intermeddling on the side of France in the pourparlers

which were going on between Berlin and Paris, with the object of providing "compensations" for Germany in other parts of Africa.

The situation was full of grave possibilities, and I hastened to make our position perfectly plain by the following declaration in the House of Commons on the 27th July:

"Conversations are proceeding between France and Germany; we are not a party to those conversations; the subect-matter of them (i.e. territorial arrangements in other parts of West Africa than Morocco) may not affect British interests. . . . It is our desire that these conversations should issue in a setttlement honourable and satisfactory to both the parties, and of which H.M's government can cordially say that it in no way prejudices British interests. We believe that to be possible. We earnestly and sincerely desire to see it accomplished. . . . We have thought it right from the beginning to make quite clear that, failing such a settlement as I have indicated, we must become an active party in the discussion of the situation. That would be our right as a signatory of the Treaty of Algeciras; it might be our obligation under the terms of our agreement of 1904 with France: it might be our duty in defence of British interests directly affected by further developments."

This statement was accepted without demur by the German Government, with which we had no further difficulties in the matter.

Finally on the 27th November, 1911, after the compact between France and Germany had been signed, Sir E. Grey, who was being assailed by domestic as well as by foreign critics, delivered in the House of Commons what ought to be regarded as an historic exposition of British policy. He denied that we had any secret agreements with any Powers; he disclaimed, in the most emphatic terms, a provocative or aggressive policy against Germany; he asserted that "if Germany had friendly arrangements to negotiate with other foreign countries with regard to Africa, we were not anxious to stand in her way any more than in theirs"; and, while deprecating any attempt "to force the pace," he expressed his conviction, that, if German policy was not aggressive, "in two or three years the talk about a great European War will have passed away, and there will have been a growth of good-will not only between Germany and England, but between those countries and the friends of both."

Strange language from the lips of a ring-leader in the "policy of encirclement." But it was a true expression of the fixed and deliberate policy of the British Government.

War had been escaped over this business: no one could say, or can say now, how narrowly. It is probable that the war party in Germany had not yet gained complete ascendancy, and that in the opinion of their experts, neither their military, their naval nor their financial preparations had reached the stage of forwardness which would justify the invention of a *casus belli.* In that case the voyage of the *Panther* may be regarded as an experimental demonstration, which (it was calculated) might well result in a French surrender, but which, if it became evident that France would not find herself alone, but that other Powers, like Great Britain, would assert their claim, based both upon their interests and their obligations, to be heard, could be treated as nothing more than a somewhat summary method of opening a discussion between France and Germany on the subject of "compensations."

At any rate it seemed to me to make it opportune to institute afresh a thorough and comprehensive investigation by the Committee of Imperial Defence of the parts which our navy and army should respectively (and co-ordinately) play in the event of our being involved in a European War. Such an

inquiry accordingly took place in the autumn of 1911. It furnished information, and led to the adoption of plans which, three years later, were found to be of the utmost importance and value.

CHAPTER XII

THE HALDANE MISSION, 1912

AT the beginning of 1912, there was the strongest disposition in the British Cabinet, which was I believe sincerely reciprocated by Herr von Bethmann, to settle outstanding difficulties between the two countries. The main obstacle in the way was the steady and ever accelerating pursuit by Germany of her policy of naval expansion. It was known that a new Navy Law was about to be introduced, for the creation of a third active squadron, which would have involved among other additions to existing units the construction of three new battleships, and a large increase of smaller craft. The general effect would be (as appeared upon careful scrutiny) that four-fifths of the entire German Navy—including 25 battleships and 8 battle cruisers—would be kept constantly and instantly ready for war. I have already quoted Mr. Churchill's description of it in the House of Commons.

This was a perfectly gratuitous programme, to

which Herr von Bethmann in his book does not conceal his own repugnance, and it would clearly entail on Great Britain, if she was to maintain her maritime preponderance, the burden of an immense addition to her own naval equipment. The Navy estimates for the ensuing year, already prepared on the supposition that the German programme would remain unaltered, must be completely revised and greatly augmented, probably by £3 millions at a minimum. Nothing could be more absurd than to proclaim to the world that the two countries had arranged their differences, and were clasping the hands of friendship, while concurrently they were quickening the pace and enlarging the scope of their naval competition.

The "mission" of Lord Haldane to Berlin in February, 1912, for which the way had been prepared by some unofficial pourparlers carried on by Herr Ballin and Sir Ernest Cassel, was an honest attempt, not to arrive at a final arrangement, but to examine the ground with the object of finding out whether there was a road by which such an arrangement might be reached. Lord Haldane's function was not that of a plenipotentiary, or even of a negotiator in the full sense; it was rather that of an ex-

plorer. He has given a full account of his conversations at Berlin in his book "Before the War," and his narrative is corroborated in all material points by Herr von Bethmann's "Reflections" and the life of "Albert Ballin." Their combined testimony is sufficient to show that the version put forward by the Kaiser in his Memoirs is both inaccurate and misleading. As has been already pointed out,* Lord Haldane explained clearly to the Chancellor why the German "Neutrality" formula put forward by him was unacceptable to us.

There was no "disavowal," as the Kaiser suggests, by Sir E. Grey of Lord Haldane, who had not and never assumed to have authority to make an agreement. He was careful during his stay in Berlin to keep in touch with M. Jules Cambon, the French Ambassador there. The one practical suggestion which he was able to bring home to his colleagues was a proposed retardation in the dates of the laying down of the three big ships in the new squadron. The Navy Bill, on being closely examined by the experts of the British Admiralty, turned out to be an even more serious new departure than had been represented to Lord Haldane. In

* "Development and Working of the Entente."

particular, the increase which it sanctioned in personnel—the number of the crews—was estimated at no less than 15,000, and the provision for torpedo boats and submarines was in excess of our most pessimistic calculations. Conversations in London between Sir Edward Grey and Count Metternich made it clear that the German Government was not prepared to modify the scheme in any substantial respect, and the Bill was in fact introduced, as it stood, in the Reichstag at the end of March.

Herr von Bethmann, in reviewing this incident, admits that "he still (1919) inclines to the view that we had to do with an honourable attempt to come to an understanding on the part of England." "It failed," he adds (not because of the naval question, which was an important but not a deciding factor) but "because England was not willing to follow out this understanding into its logical consequences. An understanding with us meant that France and Russia must lose the certainty that they could continue to count upon the support of England in pursuing an anti-German policy."

That France and Russia never had, and never claimed to have, any such "certainty," has I hope been abundantly demonstrated in the preceding

chapters. The very object of the Haldane visit, and of our subsequent negotiations in 1913-14, was to show that, if there was anywhere an "anti-German policy (which in our opinion was a mere chimera of the imagination)," we were in no sense parties to it.

That the mission of Lord Haldane did not for the moment produce tangible results was the result of two causes:

(1) The formula of neutrality which we were asked to accept, was of such a character, that if there had been no Entente at all, Great Britain would have been bound, even in her own interest alone, to refuse it. It would for instance, as Lord Haldane pointed out to the Chancellor, have precluded us from coming to the help of France, should Germany on any pretext attack her, and aim at getting possession of her Channel Ports.

(2) The refusal of the German Government to modify or even to discuss the main provisions of the Navy Bill was an equally grave stumbling block. They disputed the correctness of the estimates of our Admiralty as to the real effect of the scheme, and Mr. Churchill expressed his readiness that the figures should be checked by experts nominated by

both sides. As late as the 18th March, 1912, the same Minister stated in the House of Commons that England stood on the defensive, and that any reductions in the German programme would at once be imitated. "If the Germans built no ships in a given year, neither would England, and thus a limitation of armaments could be effected without formal agreement or any restriction of national sovereignty." But the only phrase used by Mr. Churchill, which had any circulation in Germany, was his statement, in an earlier speech at Glasgow in February, that while a big navy was a necessity to us, it was to Germany a luxury.

The phrase rapidly became a catchword. The Pan-German propagandists were soon in full cry, and the Navy Law was carried through by overwhelming majorities.

It is worth while to quote the context in which this much distorted expression was used:

"The purposes of British naval power are essentially defensive. . . . There is, however, this difference between the British Naval power, and the naval power of the great and friendly Empire—and I trust it may long remain the great and friendly Empire—of Germany. The British navy is to us a necessity, and from some points of view the German navy is to them more in the nature

of a luxury. Our naval power involves British existence. It is existence to us; it is expansion to them."

This was a plain statement of an obvious truth, and (though perhaps the word "luxury" was not happily chosen) it is not easy to understand why (as appears from Ballin's Life) it should have seemed to the Kaiser to be a piece of arrogance demanding an apology, or should have led Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg to characterise the speaker as "a fire-brand past praying for."

There is much difference of opinion among German writers as to where the main responsibility for the failure of what seemed for a time to be a promising overture ought to be laid. The Kaiser crudely asserts that the "negotiations finally fell through owing to the increasingly uncompromising attitude of England," which is obviously not the fact. "This Haldane episode" (he adds) "is characteristic of England's policy. The whole manœuvre, conceived on a large scale, was engineered for the sole purpose of hampering the development of the German Fleet." Herr von Bethmann acknowledges that "the introduction of the Naval Bill was a mistake, as being a move that embarrassed the relaxation that we had in view." But he adds that he could

not have "carried an abandonment of the Bill . . . without a perceptible alteration of the general political situation." He made a fatal blunder in not persisting in his resignation. His position was seriously shaken, and Tirpitz, who did not conceal his view that the Bill did not go far enough, enjoyed a corresponding accession of authority and prestige.

If the appeal made by Mr. Churchill for an automatic limitation of construction and equipment had been listened to, or his invitation a year later (26th March, 1913) to Germany to proclaim a "Naval holiday" had been accepted, the course of history might have been different.

CHAPTER XIII

THREE GERMAN AMBASSADORS

I HAVE already described * the course of the abortive negotiations for a "general formula" which took place after Lord Haldane's return from his mission, between Sir E. Grey and Count Metternich in the spring of 1912. There is reason to think that the Ambassador's attitude, and a Report which he sent to Berlin, warning his government that a continuation in the expansion of German Armaments was the highroad to ultimate war, were extremely displeasing to the Kaiser. He resigned his post, ostensibly on grounds of health, at the end of March, 1912, after holding it for more than ten years.

Count Metternich was a man of the highest honour, a vigilant and pertinacious custodian of all German interests, and at the same time genuinely anxious to maintain not only peaceful but friendly relations with Great Britain. His disposition was

* "Development and Working of the Entente."

not very genial, and he led a retired and almost isolated life in London. He was stiff and reserved, and sometimes almost acrid in his methods of expression. He was, however, a shrewd and dispassionate observer both of men and events, an honest chronicler of what he saw and heard, with a sturdy and independent judgment. He was not well adapted to serve under such masters as the wayward and opinionated Kaiser, and his vacillating though dogmatic Chancellor. He had a considerable measure both of insight and foresight; qualities in which they were both lamentably lacking.

Metternich's post was filled by Baron Marschall, at one time Foreign Secretary in Berlin, the principal emissary of Germany at the Hague Conference, and for many years, during his Ambassadorship at Constantinople, the mainspring of German policy in the Near East. He died after holding his new office in London for only a few months (September, 1912). During that short time I saw much of him, and I have always regarded his untimely removal as an international calamity. After the disappearance of Bismarck, his was without doubt the most masterful and in many ways the most acute mind in the German political world.

But for the accident of his being a Badener and not a Prussian (as he once hinted to me) he would in all probability have become Chancellor. In all the essentials of policy and statecraft, his point of view was as remote as are the poles from that of an English Liberal minister. But he was a disciple of *Realpolitik* in its true sense, with whom it was always refreshing to exchange ideas. I am as satisfied as one can be of anything in the domain of conjecture that, if he had remained, there would have been no European War in 1914. He was the only German Statesman whose personality and authority were such as not only to dominate the impetuosities and vagaries of the Kaiser, but to override and frustrate the long-laid and short-sighted plans of the military junta in Berlin.

Marschall was succeeded by a very different personage, Prince Lichnowsky, whose selection for such an office at such a time is still an unsolved enigma. He was a Silesian magnate, who in his earlier years had held one or two unimportant diplomatic posts, but had for a long time led the retired life of a landowner and sportsman with occasional appearances as a pamphleteer. He was a man whom it was impossible not to like—of most agree-

able manners, a lover of hospitality, and capable, as he soon showed, of ready and sympathetic adaptation to the strange ways and customs of the English people. What was more important, he was a sincere friend of peace, anxious and indeed eager to come to a settlement of all outstanding questions between Germany and Great Britain, and (so far as one can judge) not unconscious that the real danger of the immediate future lay not, in the "encirclement" of his own country, but in its enmeshment in the tangle of Austrian interests, Austrian ambitions and Austrian intrigues in the Near East. During the Ambassadors' Conference of 1913 in London he played a useful and independent part.

The failure (tragic as it was) of Lichnowsky's honest efforts and good intentions was undoubtedly due to the fact that he never possessed the confidence, and was never made party to the real designs, of the directors of German policy in Berlin. That their trust was far more fully given to his nominal subordinate, Herr von Kuhlmann, there is a good deal of evidence to suggest. It would seem that Lichnowsky never realised his own isolation; he was optimistic up to the end; and when at last he

discovered that the ship was heading straight for the rapids and the cataract—that it was a case of *imus, imus præcipites*—his despair was pathetic to witness.

CHAPTER XIV

PRE-WAR PREPARATION

Part I: The Financial Aspect

IT must have become apparent to any reader of these pages that the possibility of Great Britain being engaged, however much against her will, in a European war had for years been in the minds of those who were responsible for her Government. I have explained and attempted to vindicate the policy which they pursued in order to avert such a contingency. But we were often conscious that we were skating on the thinnest of ice, and that the peace of Europe was at the mercy of a chapter of unforeseen and unforeseeable accidents. The murder at Serajevo of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand on the 28th June, 1914, fell within that category. No one could possibly have foretold either the event itself, or its consequences. It was a strange verification of the prophetic words—already quoted—of Bismarck.

It was therefore our manifest duty, and we never lost sight of it, to prepare for the worst. The task was not an easy one.

In a country whose supreme interest is Peace, and where the Executive is directly and absolutely responsible to a democratically elected House of Commons, military and naval expenditure is always, and justly, scanned and scrutinised with a jealous eye. Especially keen and vigilant is the criticism to which it is subjected when it is proposed by a Liberal Government, whose supporters are peculiarly bound, both by their tradition and their professions, to pursue Peace and to practise Economy.

Another factor of constantly growing importance during the ten years which preceded the War, was the competition between expenditure on Armaments and expenditure on Social Reform. Social Reform was not neglected; large new liabilities were incurred by the State for Old Age Pensions, National Insurance, and cognate measures. But there were still long and costly arrears to be made good, especially in such matters as National Education, Housing and Land. The summoning of the Hague Conferences had encouraged the il-

lusory hope that the limitation of Armaments might become an agreed "plank" in a new platform of international policy. The Social Reformer felt entitled to grudge every penny of the taxpayer's money which went to increased expenditure on any form of armaments, without the clearest proof of absolute necessity, and to demand on the contrary a steady and continuous lowering of Army and Navy Estimates. And this, as I have shown, was actually done, in the case of the Navy, by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's Government.

Indeed, according to an official statement made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the House of Commons on June 9th, 1914, the cost of Armaments per head of the population, which in the year 1904-5 was £1.13.5. had only risen in the Estimates for 1914-15 to £1.13.10., having in the interval been as low as £1.6.4. in the years 1907-8 and 1908-9.

The revenue raised by taxation rose from £130 millions in 1905-6 to £171 millions in the final Estimates of 1914-15: that is to say, on balance, by £41 millions. The main items of increased expenditure, on a comparison of the two years, were for Social Reforms £22 millions, and for the Navy

£18¼ millions. We had moreover for the last eight years been paying off the National debt at the rate of 10 millions a year.

The difficulty of obtaining authority for this large expansion of Naval Armaments naturally began in the Cabinet itself. We all started (as the action of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's Government shows) with the hope, and in the belief, that a pause, and even a reduction, in the rate of construction could be attained by agreement. It was with regret and disappointment, as the years went on, that we were reluctantly—some of us sooner, others of us later—driven by the action of Germany to renounce any such expectation.

The German Naval Law of 1907 (passed after the failure of the Hague Conference of that year through the German veto to come to an understanding regarding the limitation of Armaments) effectually blocked the way. Speaking more than two years later (14th July, 1910) in the House of Commons, I stated as clearly as I could what had been its effect:

"The German Government told us . . . that their procedure in this matter is governed by an Act of the Reichstag under which the programme automatically

proceeds year by year. . . . We are now, we may hope, at the very crest of the wave. If it were possible even now by arrangement to reduce the rate of construction no one would be more delighted than His Majesty's Government. We have approached the German Government on the subject. They have found themselves unable to do anything, they cannot do it without an act of the Reichstag repealing their Navy Law. They tell us, and no doubt with great truth, that they would not have the support of public opinion in Germany to a modified programme."

This was said in 1910. Two years later, after the Haldane Mission to Berlin, the new Navy Law of 1912 was passed; the hope that I had expressed that we were reaching the "crest of the wave" was finally dissipated; and I believe that thereafter even the most patiently optimistic of my colleagues began to feel a diminishing faith in limitation or reduction by agreement between Germany and ourselves.

But, granted that the German challenge had to be taken up, there was abundant room for acute difference of opinion, and animated clash of discussion, both as to magnitude of volume and rate of acceleration, in our necessary response. I have vivid memories of these debates in the Cabinet,

conducted always with fine temper and genuine friendliness, but with a wealth of expert knowledge, and (sometimes) with an almost embarrassing exuberance of dialectical ability. As a rule, I endeavoured to preserve an arbitral attitude, but having arrived in my own mind at clear and definite conclusions, I generally succeeded in the end in carrying my colleagues with me.

There was still the House of Commons to deal with. The difficulties there, though not inconsiderable, were such as to yield to a little tactful handling. Estimates presented upon the authority of a Cabinet, in which the advocates of peace and economy, and the sworn enemies of militarism were known to have a powerful if not a predominant voice, though much and properly canvassed in detail, could not, in principle and as a whole, be opposed by the Liberal Party, to whom they were commended (to cite no other names) by the joint *imprimatur* of Sir Edward Grey and Mr. Lloyd George. The criticism of the regular Opposition—whose freebooters and camp followers had adopted as a kind of slogan, in 1908 and 1909, the now almost unintelligible catch-word: "We must have

Eight"—was, as a rule, directed to showing that we were doing, not too much, but not enough.

In the end, as has been already stated, the Naval Estimates for 1914-15—the highest ever voted, were sanctioned by the House of Commons.

CHAPTER XV

PRE-WAR PREPARATION

Part II: Committee of Defence

I COME now to describe the machinery by which the policy of the Cabinet was translated into concrete and workable plans.

I will say little of the War Office and the Admiralty, of which the one under Lord Haldane, and the other under the successive rules of Mr. McKenna and Mr. Churchill, were models of administrative energy and efficiency.

The General Staff at the War Office was in full working order, and proved itself an invaluable machine. Lord Nicholson and Sir Henry Wilson (to speak only of those who have passed away) were among its moving spirits. It was developed (as will presently be seen) by Lord Haldane into an Imperial General Staff.

The Admiralty, on its technical side, was for

years dominated by two overshadowing figures: Sir John Fisher and Sir Arthur Wilson.

Fisher, both in his qualities and their defects, was one of the most remarkable men of his time. His whole soul was in his profession: he brought to it a singularly inventive and original mind, and a wide, though intermittent, range of imaginative vision; and he worked every day harder and for longer hours than probably any other servant of the Crown. But he was domineering and combative, and for years became the storm-centre of a succession of cyclones which ravaged the higher personnel of the Navy. He had always at his command an inexhaustible reservoir of verbose and picturesque phraseology, upon which he drew freely and even recklessly both with tongue and pen. There were moments when he seemed almost to have lost his intellectual balance; but in the midst of a resonant tirade against the incurable stupidity of mankind in general, and politicians in particular, he would break off and delight one with the infectious gaiety, and sometimes the physical pranks of an overgrown school-boy. I saw him constantly, often daily, for years, and though we had our differences

(sometimes acute ones) we remained good friends to the end.*

It would be difficult to imagine a greater contrast to this exuberant and even flamboyant personality than that of Sir Arthur Wilson: admittedly the finest strategist and tactician in our Navy, taciturn, self-contained, with an almost invincible natural reluctance to share his counsels with others. But different as were their idiosyncrasies, neither of these great experts would have anything to do with a Naval Staff. It was only when both had ceased to be members of the Board of Admiralty, that Mr. Churchill was really free to set about the creation of such a body.

It had long been a capital defect in our naval and military systems that there was no real co-ordination between them, no provision for the joint, continuous, and systematic survey of all the problems of Imperial and Domestic defence. It was under Mr. Balfour's Premiership that the gap was filled by the constitution of the Committee of Imperial Defence.

* One of his peculiarities was a strange fondness for hearing sermons. I have known him to go to church three times on a Sunday, to sample the preachers. Needless to say, he was not one of those who listened with "meekness" to the word.

It should be borne in mind that the Committee was not intended to supplant the Departments, and still less the Cabinet. It was not a Committee of the Privy Council. It was and remained, not an Executive, but a Consultative body. In form it consisted of such persons as from time to time the Prime Minister chose to summon, and to this fluidity in its composition, which varied with the particular subject-matter under examination, much of its efficiency and usefulness was due. The Prime Minister who was the only permanent member, always presided, and certain of his Cabinet colleagues such as the Secretary of State for War, the First Lord of the Admiralty, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the Foreign Secretary, were present almost as a matter of course. The Secretaries of State for the Colonies and India usually but not always attended. The other members comprised the principal experts of the Admiralty and the War Office, and sometimes of other departments such as the Board of Trade, and distinguished soldiers, sailors, and administrators from outlying parts of the Empire (such as Lord Kitchener) who chanced from time to time to be in England. Unofficial persons were introduced, like

Lord Esher, who was for years a constant attendant. There was no limitation of number: in the Minutes, which I have before me as I write, I find that on one occasion (the 14th of December, 1911) there was a gathering of 24, which included the President and Secretary of the Board of Trade, the Postmaster General, and the Chairman of the Board of Inland Revenue.

The Committee met at frequent intervals, and always with special subjects on its agenda. Much of the detailed work was done by sub-committees, who sifted the particular questions submitted to them and brought their conclusions before the full Committee. I myself, when Chancellor of the Exchequer, was appointed by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman in November, 1907, chairman of such a sub-committee, which sat until August, 1908: it dealt exhaustively with the possibilities of invasion. There were two permanent sub-committees, one to deal with Overseas, the other with Home Ports, Defence.

The Committee in my time was singularly fortunate in its two successive Secretaries: Rear-Admiral Sir C. L. Ottley, and Lt.-Colonel Sir Maurice Hankey. They were assisted by a very

small but highly competent staff, and it is impossible to exaggerate the thoroughness and the value of their work.

I must repeat that no large question of policy was settled by the conclusions of the Committee of Imperial Defence. In such cases the final decision always rested with the Cabinet. But I can recall few instances (if any) in which conclusions suggested by the Committee were overruled by the Cabinet.

Whether or not Great Britain was adequately prepared for war is a question which history will have to answer. But the historian will find material relevant to his inquiry in the outline which I am about to give of the activities in those critical years of the Committee of Imperial Defence.

In 1907 an inquiry was undertaken by a subcommittee under Lord Morley, into the Military Requirements of the British Empire as affected by India. The result of this was to show that reinforcements of 100,000 men might be required in the first six months of war on the Indian Frontier. This was one of the assumptions on which Lord Haldane framed his scheme for an Expeditionary Force.

The next stage was the inquiry into invasion, appointed at the instance of Lord Roberts, to which I have already referred in 1907-8.

The sub-committee occupied some months in taking evidence from Lord Roberts, and other naval and military experts, and its conclusions as affirmed with some unimportant amendments by the full committee on 22nd October, 1908, were as follows:—

(1) that so long as our naval supremacy is assured against any reasonably probable combination of Powers, invasion is impracticable;

(2) that if we permanently lose command of the sea, whatever may be the strength and organisation of the Home force, the subjection of the country to the enemy is inevitable;

(3) that our Army for Home Defence ought to be sufficient in number and organisation not only to repel small raids, but to compel an enemy who contemplates invasion to come with so substantial a force as will make it impossible for him to evade our fleets;

(4) that to insure an ample margin of safety, such a force may, for purposes of calculation, be assumed to be 70,000 men;

(5) that in the event of our being engaged in a war on the frontier of India which required 100,000 regular troops to be sent from the United Kingdom during the first year, the new organisation of the army at home will secure that there will be left in this country during the first six months a sufficient number of regular and other troops to deal with a force of 70,000 men;

(6) that on the assumption that the Territorial force is embodied on the outbreak of war, there will also be after the expiration of six months, a sufficient number of regulars and trained Territorials to make it practically certain that no enemy will attempt the operation with a smaller force than that assumed above.

These conclusions were concurred in by our principal Naval and Military advisers at that time—Sir John Fisher, Sir William Nicholson, and Sir John French—who were all members of the sub-committee. They were carefully kept in view during the years which followed. It was on this basis that the scheme for Home Defence was built up. I may add that the conclusions of 1908 were not

materially affected by a later inquiry which I directed in 1913-1914.

Then followed another inquiry, over which I presided, into the military needs of the Empire as affected by the Continent of Europe. As the result of this the General Staff were allowed to work out their plans on the assumption that an Expeditionary Force might have to be sent to the Continent. Great stress was laid by the Admiralty on the importance of Blockade. Meanwhile, inquiries had taken place, under Lord Morley, into the military needs of the Empire as affected by Egypt, and, into our position in Southern Persia and the Persian Gulf, with special regard to the Bagdad Railway.

All the above inquiries were finished by August, 1909. It would not be an unjust claim to say that the Government had by that date investigated the whole of the ground covered by a possible war with Germany—the naval position: the possibilities of blockade; the invasion problem; the Continental problem: the Egyptian problem.

After August, 1909, we entered upon a new stage in the task of preparation. There was an inquiry under Lord Hardinge into the Treatment of Neu-

tral and Enemy Merchant Ships in time of war, which made provision *inter alia,* for the seizure of enemy ships in our ports. There was a prolonged investigation, under Lord Desart, into the many problems connected with Trading with the Enemy, lasting for two years. Another series of inquiries dealt with the preservation of our own economic situation in time of war. They led to far-reaching results such as the arrangements for the control of the railways and ports; an overhaul of the whole question of supplies, and, finally (under the impulse of Mr. Churchill), a scheme for the national insurance of ships and cargoes, which was only completed in 1914, and adopted in all its details forty-eight hours before the actual outbreak of hostilities.

Meanwhile, all sorts of complementary and subsidiary investigations had taken place. A Counter-Espionage Bureau had been set up in the War Office. The questions of Press Censorship, Postal Censorship, and the Treatment of Aliens, started in 1909, dragged on in seemingly interminable discussions which were completed between 1912 and 1914. The protection of our own cables and the attack on our enemy's cables, was thoroughly examined; as were Aerial Navigation and its laws;

the defence of the Suez Canal and of Hong Kong: the strategic situation both in the Pacific and the Mediterranean. In view of the altered disposition of our Fleet after the change of base from the Mediterranean to the North Seas, special attention was given to the provision of defences at Cromarty and in the Forth. The Over-Seas and Home Ports sub-committees were all the time continuously at work.

I am not sure that the compilation of the War Book was not the most important step of all. Into the War Book, which was started in 1910, we incorporated all the pre-determined action, decided upon as the result of the innumerable inquiries, in the contingency of war. It was constantly supplemented and kept up to date, and had by 1914 reached a remarkably high standard of completeness. Indeed, by then, the draft Orders in Council accompanied the King wherever he went in time of profound peace, as well as being kept set up in type in the printer's office; so that on a sudden outbreak of war they could be circulated and put into operation at a moment's notice.

When in 1914 the "precautionary period" was declared to have arrived, the carefully concerted

and detailed arrangements of the War Book were set at work by all the Departments, and the authorities central and local, concerned, without hitch, without friction, and without delay.

CHAPTER XVI

PRE-WAR PREPARATIONS

Part III: The Dominions in Council

AN Imperial Conference on Defence was held in London in 1909, and when it had concluded its labours I invited the Dominion representatives who had attended it to a meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence, which was held on the 19th August. Amongst the Dominion statesmen who were present were three Prime Ministers (those of New Zealand, Newfoundland and Natal) and Ministers of Defence and Marine from other Colonies.

The meeting was a formal one, to give me the opportunity on behalf of the Imperial Government to express the hope that it might be possible that the attendance and co-operation of Dominion representatives should be more frequent in the future than in the past. In welcoming our guests I used the following language:—

"His Majesty's Government have no desire to interfere in any way with local autonomy, and they quite realise that the Governments of the Dominions must consult local sentiment. The main problem however of Imperial Defence is a single one common to every part of the Empire. Once committed to war, it will be impossible to localise the theatre of war or the issues, which will be common to the Empire as a whole. A homogeneous organisation for Imperial Defence and a single direction is therefore necessary, and this I believe will be recognised more and more in the future."

The following two years (1909-11) were a period of continuous though quiet activity both at home and in the Dominions in the development, with due regard to local conditions and local sentiment, of a scheme of co-related Imperial Defence. Lord Haldane brought into existence the Imperial General Staff which was in direct contact with all the Staffs in the Dominions. Canada (which in the past had never paid anything towards the cost of the British Navy) took over the charge of her defences and began building a Navy of her own. Australia (which had for years made a pecuniary contribution) started the construction of a Fleet Unit (to be completed by the end of 1912) the whole cost of which was taken over by the Commonwealth Parliament. New Zealand had presented to the

Royal Navy a first class armoured cruiser. On the military side, at the invitation of the Dominions, Sir John French had visited Canada, and Lord Kitchener Australia and New Zealand, to inspect and advise upon the future organisation of their forces, and in all three cases the recommendations made were adopted by the local Governments and Parliaments, and were being carried into effect.

It follows that when the next Imperial Conference was held in London in the spring of 1911, a new stage had been reached, and the relations between these growing and reorganised Dominion forces, both naval and military, and the Imperial Navy and Army, and the parts, whether in the way of attack or defence, which they would respectively be called upon to play in the event of war, presented a number of problems which urgently called for joint consultation and concerted conclusions.

I accordingly summoned the Dominion delegates to a full gathering of the Committee of Imperial Defence, in preparation for which a number of carefully thought out memoranda had been circulated in advance. The first meeting was held on the 26th May, 1911, and its composition was so remarkable both in personal and in representative

character that it deserves to be recalled. In addition to the principal members of the Imperial Cabinet and the experts of the fighting Services, there were present five Prime Ministers from Overseas, Sir Wilfred Laurier, Mr. Fisher, Sir Joseph Ward, General Botha, and Sir Edward Morris, each accompanied by one or more of his colleagues; and Lord Kitchener.

It was impossible to lay the serious problems which confronted us before a body of greater experience and authority. I asked Sir Edward Grey to preface its deliberations by an exposition, comprehensive and strictly confidential, of the international situation.

Sir Edward Grey's statement was so full and frank, and has such a close bearing, not only upon the matters then before the Committee, but upon the whole of our pre-war policy, that I do not hesitate to reproduce at length some of its salient passages.

Necessity for Common Foreign Policy.

"The starting point, I imagine, of the consultation which we are now going to have on Foreign Policy, and the foreign situation, is really the

creation and growing strength of separate fleets and forces in the Dominions of which the Prime Minister has just given some account. It is possible to have separate fleets in a united Empire, but it is not possible to have separate fleets in a united Empire without having a common foreign policy which shall determine the action of the different forces maintained in different parts of the Empire. If the action of the forces in different parts of the Empire is determined by divergent views of foreign policy, it is obvious that there cannot be union, and that the Empire would not consent to share an unlimited liability, the risks of which it cannot gauge, because this liability would be imposed upon it by different parts of the Empire having different policies. Therefore, the first point I want to make is this, that the creation of separate fleets has made it essential that the foreign policy of the Empire should be a common policy. If it is to be a common policy, it is obviously one on which the Dominions must be taken into consultation, which they must know, which they must understand, and which they must approve; and it is in the hope and belief that the foreign policy of this country does command the assent

and the approval, and is so reasonable that it must command the assent and approval of the Dominions, that we wish to have a consultation, and I wish to explain, as fully as I can, the present situation of Foreign Affairs.

Secrecy.

"That is much better done at the Committee of Imperial Defence than at the Conference itself, first of all because there must be absolute secrecy. For two reasons there must be absolute secrecy: our Foreign Policy really is anything but a Machiavellian one; it is most simple and straightforward, as I hope will appear in the course of what I have to say; but at the same time you cannot show the whole of your hand openly to the rest of the world, which is not showing its hand to you. That is one reason for having it absolutely secret. In the next place you cannot deal with the foreign policy of this country without also discussing somewhat freely your opinion of the foreign policy and views of other countries and they even more dislike having their foreign policy canvassed in public than we ourselves do.

Naval Power and Foreign Policy.

"I shall try to bring out—especially with regard to our European policy—that what really determines the foreign policy of this country is the question of sea power. It is the naval question which underlies the whole of our European foreign policy, and more than our European foreign policy; but I will deal with the foreign policy, in Europe first, and try to bring out that point."

France and Russia.

Sir E. Grey then gave a brief sketch of our relations with other Great Powers of Europe since 1892; illustrated the constant friction that went on while we were in isolation, particularly with France and Russia, "who were supposed to be the restless Powers"; and showed how the two agreements of 1904 and 1907, which constituted the Entente, had transformed for the better our relations with those two countries, at the cost, no doubt, of considerable jealousy in Germany, with whom the "diplomatic atmosphere was not so good as it was before."

Germany.

"We are most anxious to keep on the best of terms with Germany. I believe she is also genuinely anxious to be on good terms with us, and we smooth over the matters which arise between us without difficulty. . . . But we must make it a cardinal condition in all our negotiations with Germany that if we come to any understanding of a public kind which puts us on good relations with Germany it must be an understanding which must not put us back into the old bad relations with France and Russia. That means to say that if we publicly make friendship with Germany it must be a friendship in which we take our existing friends in Europe with us, and to which they become parties. It must also be clear that, side by side with that, it will become equally apparent that there is no chance of a disturbance of the peace between Germany and France or Germany and Russia. That is what I mean by taking our friends with us into any new friendship into which we may go.

The Real Danger.

"There is no danger, no appreciable danger, of our being involved in any considerable trouble in

Europe, unless there is some Power, or group of Powers, in Europe which has the ambition of achieving what I would call the Napoleonic policy. That would be a policy on the part of the strongest Power in Europe, or of the strongest group of Powers in Europe, of first of all separating the other Powers outside their own group from each other, taking them in detail, crushing them singly if need be, and forcing each into the orbit of the policy of the strongest Power, or of the strongest group of Powers. Now, if any policy of that sort was pursued by any Power, it could only be pursued by the strongest Power, or the strongest group of Powers in Europe at the moment. The moment it was pursued, the moment the weakest Powers in Europe were assailed, either by diplomacy or by force, one by one they would appeal to us to help them. I may say at once we are not committed by entanglements which tie our hands. Our hands are free, and I have nothing to disclose as to our being bound by any alliances, which is not known to all the world at the present time. But I do feel this very strongly, that if such a situation should arise, and there was a risk of all the Powers, or a group of Powers, acquiring such a dominating position in

Europe that on the Continent of Europe it would be the arbiter not only of peace and war, but of the diplomacy of all the other Powers of Europe, and if while that process was going on we were appealed to for help and sat by and looked on and did nothing, then people ought to realise that the result would be one great combination in Europe, outside which we should be left without a friend. If that was the result, then the naval situation would be this, that if we meant to keep the command of the sea we should have to estimate as a probable combination against us of fleets in Europe not two Powers but five Powers. Now, that is the situation, and that is why I say, though I do not think there is any prospect that one can reasonably see at the present moment of our being involved in serious trouble in Europe, it is possible that under such extreme conditions as I have named the question might arise as to whether we ought to take part by force in European affairs, and if we did it would be solely because sea power, and the necessity of keeping the command of the sea, was the underlying cause and motive of our action. So long as the maintenance of sea power and the maintenance and control of sea communication is

the underlying motive of our policy in Europe, it is obvious how that is a common interest between us here at home and all the Dominions.

Naval Competition.

"The cause of anxiety now in public opinion here as regards Germany arises entirely from the question of German naval expenditure, which is very considerable, which may be increased, and which, if it is increased, will produce an impression on the world at large that the object of Germany is to build a fleet which shall be bigger than the British fleet, and, if people once get that impression, they will say that can only be done with one object, which is the object of eventually taking the command of the sea from us. Therefore it is on naval expenditure that we have been trying especially to come to some agreement, if we can, with the German Government; such an agreement will make it clear that there is no rivalry between the two nations. It is an exceedingly difficult matter to deal with, because Germany feels it due to herself to have a large navy, and no one can but feel that that is perfectly natural on her part; but we shall do our utmost to ensure that as far as we can it shall be

made plain that, though we must build if Germany builds, we are quite ready to give every possible guarantee that can be given that we are building with no aggressive purpose, and, indeed, so far as Germany is concerned, we could not build a fleet with any aggressive purpose so long as we keep our army within its present small dimensions. Because Germany, with her powerful army, if she had a fleet bigger than the British fleet, obviously could not only defeat us at sea, but could be in London in a very short time with her army. But however much our fleet is superior to the German fleet, however much we defeat the German fleet, with the army which we have, we could never commit a serious aggression by ourselves upon German territory."

Extra European Relations.

Sir E. Grey proceeded to describe our extra-European interests and our relations with extra-European Powers especially in regard to the Bagdad Railway, where we were only concerned with securing free and equal treatment for our goods, and with seeing that the strategic situation in the Persian Gulf should not be altered to our

prejudice; in regard to Persia, where happily, owing to the Anglo-Russian Agreement both the Imperial Government and the Government of India were free from the apprehension of conflict and friction with Russia; and lastly in regard to Japan, with whom it was proposed to extend our Treaty of Alliance for an additional six years—i.e. until 1921, with the important modification that it should be definitely stated that the Alliance should not entail upon us, or upon Japan, any obligation to go to war with a Power with which we have a general arbitration treaty.

CHAPTER XVII

PRE-WAR PREPARATIONS

Part IV: The Dominions in Council (Continued)

SIR E. GREY'S statement was followed by a discussion which was mainly concerned with questions arising out of the proposed prolongation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. It was demonstrated on behalf of the Imperial Government that the Alliance enormously relieved to the benefit of the whole Empire the naval strategic situation in the Far East, and that the autonomy of the Dominions as regards the question of Japanese immigration, was in no way prejudiced by its extension in point of time. The Committee, including the Dominion delegates, unanimously approved the prolongation of the Alliance with the suggested modification, until 1921.

At the two subsequent meetings, held on May 29th, and 30th, 1911, the vitally important ques-

tions were considered of the co-operation (1) of the naval, and (2) of the military forces of the Empire; the first being introduced by the First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr. McKenna, and the second by the Secretary of State for War, Lord Haldane.

(1) *Naval Co-operation.*

Mr. McKenna at the outset laid down the general object of our naval strategy in time of war.

"The object of the Imperial Fleet will be to obtain by unity of maritime effort the command of the sea with the least possible delay. By command of the sea we understand keeping the sea open to ourselves at every point, and closing it to the enemy. Keeping the sea open means that we could at any time and everywhere transport our military forces, and that we should be able to continue our commerce in war almost as well as we can in peace. Closing the sea to the enemy means that not only the shores of these islands, but, with the exception of Canada, all the Dominions would be free from fear of invasion, and the trade of the Empire would be secure. The enemy, on the other hand, would neither be able to transport his forces

nor continue his trade, and the result of the economic pressure of the destruction of overseas trade in almost any modern state would be so serious as I believe to constitute something even more than a crippling blow.

"On the outbreak of War our problem, which will be one and the same all the whole world over, would be to seek out, to bring to battle, or to mask the enemy fleet and enemy cruisers wherever they might be found. And, further, whatever the distribution of our fleet may be, which must be determined by the distribution of the enemy's forces, there is 'the same Imperial interest affecting us all alike, to protect Imperial trade wherever it may be found.' "

The Admiralty made no secret of their opinion that the best plan would have been to have one Imperial Navy, with contribution in ships or in money from the Dominions, and this view was shared by New Zealand. But it found no favour in Canada or Australia, which had preferred to develop separate navies of their own.

The Imperial Government had of course acquiesced, and the problem submitted to the Com-

mittee was therefore—what was to be the status of these Dominion Fleets in peace and in war?

In time of peace the question presented no difficulty. All were agreed that the fleets should constitute one Imperial Navy, each administered by its own separate Admiralty, each conforming to a common standard of discipline and training, with complete interchangeability of officers and men.

But what was to happen in time of war? Here it was obvious that there was room for much difference of opinion. For it was bound up with the larger question: What is the status of a Dominion on the outbreak of war?

It would serve no useful purpose now to recapitulate in detail the animated and protracted debate which ensued. It was admitted, that if war were declared upon or by Great Britain, the whole Empire would, from the point of view of International Law, automatically be at war also; in the sense that its territory might be invaded and its sea-borne commerce harassed and destroyed by the enemy. The representatives both of Canada and Australia strongly asserted that it was an incident of Dominion status that the question of active participation of a Dominion in the war was a matter

for the local Parliament to decide. It was at the same time agreed that in the new conditions, economic and strategic, of the modern world, it is almost inconceivable that in such a contingency the Dominions would not spontaneously offer their naval and military co-operation. The Imperial Government willingly allowed that every autonomous Dominion which offered its co-operation must have the right to determine whether it should retain control over the strategic and other dispositions of its own forces, or should, at once or later, put its navy entirely at the disposal of the Imperial Admiralty.

The final conclusion arrived at with unanimity was in these terms:

"In time of war when the Dominion Fleets, in whole or in part, have been placed under the control of the Imperial Government, the ships are to form an integral part of the Imperial Fleet, and to remain under the control of the Admiralty of the United Kingdom, and be liable to be sent anywhere during the continuance of the war."

The theoretical possibilities of partial co-operation and divided command disappeared completely on the outbreak of war.

(2) *Military Co-operation.*

Lord Haldane's statement of the functions which fall to the army in an Empire like ours deserves, even at this time, to be set out in full:

"The British Army—and by the British Army I mean the army which is immediately under the British Crown—is a very composite body. It is very different from any other army in the world, and in some respects different from any other army which has ever existed in the time of history. People are fond of speaking of the small British Army, and so it is very small if you take what is at home; but they might just as well speak of the enormous British Army, because it is enormous in another aspect compared with what Germany possesses, for instance. We are an island; we are surrounded by the sea, and it has been our tradition to look to sea power, not only for carrying our troops over the seas, but for protecting these islands. The result is that our defences have been very different from those of other countries. If we were like Germany and France, with land frontiers over which a neighbouring army could mobilise and come at once, we should no doubt have resorted

long ago to compulsory service and put every citizen through a period of training, which would enable us to produce an enormous citizen army, a short range weapon to operate only for a very short time to repel invasion; but that has not been our main problem, because we have no land frontiers. We have sea frontiers which we can defend better and more cheaply, relying largely on the navy for the purpose. We have concentrated our strength on producing an oversea army or a set of oversea armies which are for the defence of India, which are for the defence of Africa, and which are for the formation of the Egyptian and Mediterranean garrisons; and in addition to that we have concentrated now on producing an expeditionary army which is in this country ready for mobilisation and which we can send to any part of the Dominions of the Crown to your assistance as you may need.

"That has meant that we have had to create a professional army in this country. Our army is raised on a professional basis,—that is to say, it is composed of men who do not go abroad by compulsion, because you could not compel men to make the army a profession for twelve years of their lives and to go abroad; it is an army which is re-

cruited out of our population, and is recruited for the purpose of supplying men to go to India, to Africa, or to Egypt, or to whatever part of the world they are wanted, and to remain there in peace, and there are others who relieve them in drafts from time to time, but who are at home, and form the nucleus of that expeditionary army for reinforcements. That expeditionary army, I need not say, on mobilisation would be completed by re-servists who have passed through their training with the overseas units with which they have served, and have come back to this country and are here available. Now it is plain that our army is totally different from the armies of the Continent, and cannot be compared with them. We have a very small army at home, but in India we have some 77,000 British troops; elsewhere in Africa and in Egypt we have other British troops, and also troops for the Mediterranean garrisons and other places, which bring up the total to something like 115,000. In addition we have an expeditionary army, ready to be mobilised at home, of over 167,000 when it is mobilised, and there are a good many other troops. We have altogether something like 300,000 men enlisted for oversea service, for

long terms, and thereby we differ totally from the armies of the Continent.

"What then of the Dominion armies, separated as they are by vast distances both from the Mother Country and from one another? The two purposes for which the entire army exists, the armies of the Dominions and the British, are local defence (which as you will see with us at home is a less important matter), and oversea defence and mutual assistance."

As to local defence, we had constituted here our Territorial Army—14 Divisions of Territorials and 14 Mounted Brigades with all necessary artillery and transport—and then numbering about 270,000. "It is a citizen army which is retained at home for local defence, for resisting raids and anything that can slip past the navy, and which contains a section, now considerable, of those who are willing to go abroad for active service, if occasion should require." In Australia and New Zealand the governments, with the help of Lord Kitchener, had worked out a very similar organisation: a second line army designed for Home Defence, but with a power to volunteer for oversea work and despatch by the Dominion Government for co-

operating in the mutual protection of whatever part of the Empire might most need assistance. Canada had her own organisation in working order, and in South Africa, where (as her representative said) the "Union was still young," the Minister of Defence, General Smuts, had already formulated a scheme of land defence.

Lord Haldane also dealt with the creation during the last two years of the Imperial General Staff, and of the arrangements which had been made for its collaboration with and representation on the separate General Staffs of the several Dominions: one of the principal points constantly kept in view being "to relieve us from the necessity of asking you to subject your local troops to any manner of control or centralised command in order to attain unity."

This epoch-making Conference (for such it was) discussed also the question of the representation of the Dominions.

I introduced the subject in an address from which I venture to quote a few sentences:

"Our suggestions are put forward on behalf of the Government merely as matters for discussion and consideration but with the object of meeting in

a practical way the feeling which was expressed at the last Conference, which, I think, has grown in intensity since—that there ought to be some opportunity for the constant co-ordination and correlation of the action of the different parts of the Empire in regard to defence. I shall point out in two or three moments what I think is now quite plain to all who are in this room, that the Committee of Imperial Defence, which meets here, is a purely advisory body. Neither the Government of the United Kingdom nor, of course, the Governments of any of the Dominions are in the least committed by any of its decisions. The function which it performs is this that we get by its means the best expert advise obtainable on any particular question or set of questions, and the fact that the politicians are associated with the experts ensures or ought to ensure that the recommendations of the Committee are not merely correct from the technical point of view, but that they are also conformable to the exigencies of practical politics. That is the scope of this Committee, and if the Dominions see their way to associate—I will not say for a moment in what manner or through what persons—periodically with this Committee authorised representatives

of their own, that would ensure, of course, in the first place a much wider range of accurate knowledge than it can at present possess as to the necessities of the different parts of the Empire, and, on the other hand, it will ensure to the Dominions that in any advice this Committee gives with regard to Imperial Defence, their special local considerations and interests have been fully taken into account.

"I will give one illustration of the importance, and the value of carrying out some such proposal as this. One of the sub-committees of this Committee of Imperial Defence, is at the present time arranging for the co-ordination of the action to be taken by all the Government Departments at the moment of the outbreak of war. We have never yet in the United Kingdom had, oddly enough, put down on paper in such a way that each Department knew exactly what it was expected to do, a full statement of their respective functions and duties the moment war was declared. The sub-committee's arrangement is that whenever a war breaks out, however suddenly the news is received, the whole war organisation of the United Kingdom should be put into operation without a moment's delay. The naval and military mobilisations and

concentrations if not already complete will at once be completed; the cables notifying the Dominions and Colonies and diplomatic representatives abroad will at once be taken from their pigeon-holes and dispatched; the intelligence system of the Empire will be put on a war footing; cable and press censorship will be established; vulnerable points, magazines, etc., will receive special attention against treacherous attack; the defences of our ports will be manned, and precautions will be taken to exclude hostile vessels from entering by force or stratagem. This sub-committee is enquiring how those obviously most important, and it may be vital steps, may be taken without friction and without delay. It would be extremely desirable if, in a matter of that kind, all the Dominions could be taken into council, and, through their representatives here, express their views as to how far and to what extent and in what way, on the outbreak of war, or in view of the outbreak of war, similar steps should be taken in their various territories.

"If the principle is accepted, that such representation is desirable, we should be guided entirely by the opinion of the Dominions as to the proper per-

sons they would select from time to time as their representatives.

"The second point is also one peculiarly for them to determine—whether they would accept the suggestion or not although we think it a valuable one—and that is that there should be established in the different Dominions Defence Committees in relation to this Committee, dealing also merely as advisory bodies for their respective Governments with the local conditions of defence and reporting from time to time, in fact, keeping in constant touch with the permanent secretariat here, between which and the secretariat there, there should be in exchange from time to time of every kind of confidential communication which might throw light upon the necessities of defence, and the best way to deal with them."

After a short and business-like debate—not on the principle but on matters of detail—the Committee unanimously adopted the following:

1. That one or more representatives, appointed by the respective Governments of the Dominions, should be invited to attend meetings of the Committee of Imperial Defence when questions of

naval and military defence affecting the Overseas Dominions are under consideration.

2. The proposal that a Defence Committee should be established in each Dominion is accepted in principle. The constitution of these Defence Committees is a matter for each Dominion to decide.

In the following years, Sir Robert Borden (who had succeeded Sir Wilfrid Laurier as Prime Minister of Canada), and other distinguished Dominion statesmen came over and sat on the Committee. These meetings were the forerunners of the Imperial War Cabinet.

I have now given an account, necessarily omitting such details of our Pre-War Preparations—the principles upon which it proceeded, its governing purposes, and the methods by which it seemed to us to be practicable to secure their attainment.

Mr. Page, the distinguished and much lamented American Ambassador, in a mood of sympathetic but critical depression, wrote during the War to Colonel House in September, 1915:

"If the English had raised an army in 1912, and made a lot of big guns, Austria would not have trampled Serbia to the earth. There would have been no war."

"Raising an army"; "making a lot of big guns"; the usually clear-thinking Ambassador allowed himself for once to lapse into something very like clap-trap. If such language means anything it means that England (to keep the peace of the world) besides preserving at all costs her supremacy over the sea; besides providing garrisons for India and her overseas possessions; besides maintaining an Expeditionary Force for immediate despatch to any part of the globe; and besides raising, training, and equipping a second line army, the Territorials, for Home Defence, ought to have converted herself into a military power on the Continental model. It is possible, and indeed probable, that her material and personal resources would have been equal to the double strain. But the essential condition of any such change (as was shown to be the case, during the war, with the adoption of conscription) would have been that it was supported by the nation with practical unanimity. Was there anything in what had happened up to 1912, or appeared then in the remotest degree likely to happen, which could or ought to have induced the nation to execute a volte-face with a united front? Everybody who lived in those times,

and every historian who writes of them with adequate knowledge, will agree that there is only one answer to the question. Any government which proposed it would have committed political suicide. It would have split the cabinet, split the House of Commons, split both political parties, and split the whole nation; if indeed that can be described as a "split" which would have been regarded as the vagary of a minority, insignificant both in authority and in numbers.

Neither for the assumption by Great Britain of the obligations of partnership in a Continental Alliance, nor (still less) for the militarisation of her people, would any countenance have been afforded by national opinion.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE

I should like to add to the general considerations set forth at the end of this Chapter, some highly pertinent arguments from a practical and administrative point of view, which are taken from Lord Haldane's book "Before the War" (pp. 170-179):

"It is said that we in Great Britain ought, before entering on the Entente, to have provided an army, not

of 160,000, but of 2,000,000 men. And it is remarked that this is what we had to do in the end. This suggestion does not, however, bear scrutiny. No doubt it would have been a great advantage if, in addition to our tremendous navy, we could have produced, at the outbreak of the war, 2,000,000 men, so trained as to be the equals in this respect of German troops, and properly fashioned into the great divisions that were necessary, with full equipment and auxiliary service. But to train the recruits, and to command such an army when fashioned, would have required a very great corps of professional officers of high military education, many times as large as we had actually raised. How were these to have been got?

"When, therefore, even distinguished commanders in the field express regret at the want of foresight of the British nation in not having prepared a much larger army before 1914, I would respectfully ask them how they imagine it could have been done.

"Now, the British nation has put its money and its fighting spirit primarily into its navy and its oversea forces. Why? Because, just as the Continental tradition had its genesis in the necessity for instant readiness to defend land frontiers, so our tradition has had its genesis in the vital necessity of always commanding the sea.

"But what I am saying does not rest on my own conclusions alone. In the year 1912 the then Chief of the General Staff told me that he and the General Staff would like to investigate, as a purely military problem, the question whether we could or could not raise a great army. I thought this a reasonable inquiry and sanctioned and found money for it, only stipulating that they

should consult with the Administrative Staffs when assembling the materials for the investigation. The outcome was embodied in a report made to me by Lord Nicholson, himself a soldier who had a strong desire for compulsory service and a large army. He reported, as the result of a prolonged and careful investigation, that, alike as regarded officers and as regarded buildings and equipment, the conclusion of the General Staff was that it would be in a high degree unwise to try, during a period of unrest on the Continent, to commence a new military system. It could not be built up excepting after much unavoidable delay. We might at once experience a falling off in voluntary recruiting, and so become seriously weaker before we had a chance of becoming stronger. And the temptation to a foreign General Staff to make an early end of what it might insist on interpreting as preparation for aggression on our part would be too strong to be risked. What we should get might prove to be a mob in place of an army. I quite agreed, and not the less because it was highly improbable that the country would have looked at anything of the sort.

"It is, I think, certain that for purely military reasons, even if, in view of political (including diplomatic) difficulties any party in the State had felt itself able to undertake the task of raising a great army under compulsory service, and to set itself to accomplish it, say, within the ten years before the war, the fulfilment of the undertaking could not have been accomplished, and failure in it would have made us much weaker than we were when the war broke out. The only course really open was to make use of the existing voluntary system, and bring its organisation for war up to the modern requirements, of which they were in 1906 far short."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE EARLY MONTHS OF 1914: RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

ON the 4th February, 1914, Herr von Jagow, the Prussian Foreign Secretary, informed a Committee of the Reichstag that Anglo-German relations were "very good." It might well have seemed that we were nearing the goal of the policy which Great Britain had steadily pursued; moving stage by stage, to the settlement of outstanding causes of difference with particular States; circumscribing the scope of local disputes; and working, in cordial friendship with France and Russia, for the maintenance of the balance of power, which was the best safeguard of European peace. Upon a retrospect extending over the previous ten years, the progress which had actually been made was remarkable.

In the days of isolation the issues of peace and war between ourselves and one or another of the Great Powers—France and Russia in particular—

had more than once appeared to hang on a thread. Egypt, the Sudan, Siam, Persia, the Pamirs (to mention only a few illustrations), furnished copious material for periodical pin-pricking—and worse. This source of international friction and peril had been completely removed. The Morocco incident, or series of incidents, which for the first time brought the extra-European interests and ambitions of France and Germany into sharp collision, had been got out of the way, not without a great deal of bad blood, but without recourse to arms. In the Balkans, it was true, there had been two local campaigns, and the Treaty of Bucharest, which had for the time suspended hostilities, was more in the nature of a stop-gap than of a permanent settlement.

We know now (through Mr. Morgenthau, the American Ambassador at Constantinople) that in May, 1914, the Austrian Emperor used this language to his Ambassador at Constantinople, the Marquis Pallavicini: "The Central Powers cannot accept the Treaty of Bucharest as definitely settling the Balkan question: *nothing but a general war* can bring about a suitable solution."

But at any rate the Great Powers had so far been

kept out of the ring; with what difficulties and risks, and by the exercise, not in one quarter only, of how much patience and tact, is already becoming apparent to the student of history.

Not the least satisfactory feature in the review was the improvement, recorded by Herr von Jagow, in Anglo-German relations. I have already described the general character and effect of the negotiations in 1913-14 between the two Governments in regard to Asiatic Turkey and Africa, which had resulted on the eve of the outbreak of war, in substantial agreement upon a number of complicated and troublesome details.

There were, however, causes of disquietude, some of them visible to the experienced eye, others still in the region of conjecture, and only fully disclosed after war had actually broken out. The competition in naval expenditure forced by Germany upon Great Britain, though burdensome to the British taxpayer, was not in itself a likely source of immediate danger. We had quite determined to maintain our necessary predominance at sea, and we were well able to make that determination effective. But we could not shut our eyes to the fact that other States—not included either in the Triple Al-

liance or the Entente—were following the German example, and developing navies of their own. As an illustration of what was going on, it may be recalled that, at the beginning of August, 1914, there were under construction in British ship-yards 2 battleships for Turkey; 4 destroyers for Greece; and a number of various descriptions of armoured craft for countries like Chile and Brazil. These, and the like, were all potential additions to one or another of the navies of the Greater Powers in the event of a world-wide conflict. Indeed the 2 Turkish battleships were to make a welcome addition to our own.

I may quote here from a memorandum which Mr. Churchill circulated to his colleagues early in January, 1914:

"Besides the Great Powers, there are many small States who are buying or building great ships of war, and whose vessels may by some diplomatic combination, or by duress, be brought into the line against us. None of these Powers need, like us, navies to defend their actual safety or independence. They build them so as to play a part in the world's affairs. It is sport to them. It is death to us."

He added, with equal truth and cogency: "Although" (during the past year) "the foundations

of peace among the Great Powers have been strengthened, the causes which might lead to a general war have not been removed . . . There has not been the slightest abatement of naval and military preparation. On the contrary, we are witnessing this year increases of expenditure by the Continental Powers beyond all previous experience. The world is arming as it has never armed before. Every suggestion of arrest or limitation has been brushed aside."

The concluding part of this able memorandum brings into deserved prominence the very substantial rise which had been going on in the armies of the Continent.

The British army as has been shown above had from 1906 onwards been completely recast, under Lord Haldane's guidance, and in 1911 the process was practically completed. Our military forces were not substantially added to between 1911 and 1914.

It was otherwise on the Continent. By the Imperial Constitution the peace footing of the German army was fixed at 1 per cent of the population, and so it remained until 1912. By the Army Law of that year (passed after the Morocco crisis)

the ratio was abandoned, and the army was raised (out of a population of 66,000,000) to 723,000. In the following year 1913, during the Balkan troubles, a New Army law was passed, by which the peace strength of the German army was fixed at 870,000; to meet the cost an "exceptional levy" was made.

M. Poincaré's comment is worthy of attention. "The truth is," he says, "that at the moment when she was voting the new Military Law, Germany was still seeking to gain time. . . . When one reads the memorandum which was drawn up for the purpose of securing from the Reichstag in March, 1913, sanction for the new Military Law, one finds the following revealing passage:

> 'The people must be accustomed to the belief that an offensive war on our part is a necessity, for the purpose of combating the provocations of the adversary.
>
> 'Affairs must be handled in such a manner that under the pressure of powerful armaments, economic sacrifices, and a critical political situation, the beginning of hostilities will be considered a deliverance.' "

Other European countries followed Germany's example. France returned to the rule of 3 years' service. . . . Belgium introduced universal military

service. . . . In Russia the term of service was lengthened to 3¼ years. . . . Great Britain alone of the Entente Powers made no change in her military establishment.*

It is estimated that in the single year 1913 the Continental States added £50 million to their military expenditure.

The Germanisation of Turkey, which had been going on for years, more or less quietly, under the skilful manipulation of Marschall, was boldly advertised to the world by the appointment in December, 1913, of General Liman von Sanders, in spite of the protests of Russia, to the post of Inspector General of the Ottoman Army. Moreover, Germany was becoming more and more deeply committed to the Anti-Slav policy of Austria in the Balkans, choked for the moment, but only for the moment, by the Treaty of Bucharest. As that policy could only be carried out at the risk, or indeed with the certainty, of ultimate collision with Russia, its prosecution by Austria with the connivance, open or covert, of Germany was a standing menace to the peace of Europe. The

* See Schmitt: "England and Germany," pp. 56-59, where all the facts are set out in detail.

teaching and practice of Bismarck with whom a friendly Russia was a cardinal point of policy, had been entirely forgotten by his degenerate successors at Berlin.

There were, moreover, in each of the three countries which belonged to the Entente, internal troubles, which if they had otherwise been inclined to be bellicose, must have given them pause; but, for that very reason, offered the strongest temptations to the promoters of an aggressive militant policy both in Vienna and Berlin.

In Russia there was much industrial fermentation—strikes, and disorganisation of public services, followed by Government reprisals against Trade Unions and the Labour press.

The Czar was not fortunate in his choice of Ministers; in his immediate entourage there was no one of the calibre of Count Witte. Among his diplomatic representatives at the Courts of the Great Powers, Benckendorff in London was, so far as one can judge, the only one who was at once shrewd and level headed, a genuine lover of peace, distrustful both of reaction and of adventure, and endowed with a real sense of the European perspective. He was happily spared the spectacle of the final col-

lapse of the autocratic régime. Iswolski in Paris had the fatal cleverness which is blind, or blinds itself, to realities obvious to less sophisticated eyes, without prescience or insight, and therefore despite his gifts and faculties, an ill-balanced and even dangerous advisor. It was significant that during M. Poincaré's visit in July, 1914, the Czar was advised to remain at home at Peterhof, when the French President made his entry into St. Petersburg.

In France there had been and was, phase following phase, an era of ministerial instability; the distractions created by the trial of Mme. Caillaux; and the sensational report of Senator Humbert on the alleged deficiencies in the equipment of the army. It dwelt especially on the shortage of ammunition and of heavy guns.

Nor was Great Britain free from domestic anxieties. The prospect of the Home Rule Bill for Ireland coming into operation was being met by threats of armed resistance in Ulster, encouraged by the demeanour and declarations of many of the Unionist leaders in Great Britain. The surreptitious importation and concealed storage of rifles and ammunition, and the enrolment of Volun-

teers (on both sides), were on the increase. The intransigents of Ulster were setting up a provincial Government, which assumed to meet in Belfast early in July. Sinn Fein was still little more than the rhetorical title of what those who thought they knew, and who presumably ought to have known, the realities of Irish life, regarded as an idealist and academic propaganda. It was consistently belittled by the leaders of the old Nationalist party, who, still cherishing the hope of Irish unity, were urgent in their insistence against anything in the nature of coercive or repressive action.

There were ominous symptoms of possible disaffection in some sections of the army, and I thought the situation so serious that, in the spring of 1914, I added to my duties as Prime Minister those of Secretary of State for War.

What is called "Society" in London was riven after a fashion without example since the early days of Home Rule in 1886. Mr. Page records that a certain Duchess told him that she and her husband had been invited to dine at the French Ambassador's. "If the Duke" said she, "went into any house where there was any member of this Government, he'd turn and walk out again." So

before acceptance of the invitation, the Duke's secretary had been sent on a precautionary mission to the Ambassador's secretary, to make sure that there was no chance of such a contamination. The same Great Lady complains that she "positively had to sit in the Peeresses' gallery in plain sight of the wives of two members of the Cabinet!"

The Government had proposed by way of compromise a scheme of "contracting out" for Ulster. The King, on their advice, took the unusual step of summoning a Conference of political leaders, Liberals, Unionists, Ulstermen, and Nationalists. The Conference was held at Buckingham Palace on July 20th (a fortnight before the War), and broke down on what must now seem the infinitely trivial point of the boundaries of two of the Ulster counties. Such was the unyielding temper of the extremists on both sides. There is no doubt that the possibility, and even the probability, of civil war in these islands, was a factor that entered into the minds, and affected the calculations, of the military junta, which had already captured the control of the policy of the Central Powers. They had come to the definite conclusion that in the event of war, Great Britain could be ruled

out as a possible combatant. It may not be out of place, though it goes far beyond the confines of my narrative, to note here a subsequent illustration of the same want of imagination, and the same failure to grasp realities on the part of the German military mind. Two years later (January, 1917) when, at a critical moment in the war, the civilian element in the German Government once more succumbed to the military and naval authorities, and the campaign of unrestricted submarine warfare was initiated, the decision was largely influenced by a similar miscalculation as to the United States of America. Austria was strongly opposed to the new departure, and Count Czernin (who had become her Foreign Minister after the death of the Emperor Francis Joseph) gives an account in a detailed memorandum of the arguments put forward on behalf of Germany at a Council, held in Vienna and presided over by the new Emperor Charles on the 20th January, 1917. Amongst them was the following:

"The Germans are of the opinion that the United States will not, if the U-boat policy is adopted, go so far as making a breach with the Central Powers. If that should occur, America would be too late, and could only come into action after England had been beaten. America

is not prepared for war, which was clearly shown at the time of the Mexican crisis; she lives in fear of Japan, and has to fight against agricultural and social difficulties. Besides which, Mr. Wilson is a pacifist, and the Germans presume that after his election he will adopt a still more decided tendency that way, for his election will not be due to the anti-German Eastern States, but to the co-operation of the Central and Western States, that are opposed to the War, and to the Irish and Germans. These considerations, together with the Entente's insulting answer to President Wilson's peace proposal do not point to the probability of America plunging rapidly into war." *

Such were the main points of the German case. The memorandum proceeds:

"Both the Austrian Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Hungarian Prime Minister pointed out what disastrous consequences would ensue from America's intervention in a military, moral, agricultural and financial sense. . . . It was also debated whether a continuation of the U-boat war to the present extent (the destruction on an average of 400,000 tons per month) would not be more likely to achieve the desired end, and if it were not more advisable not to play our last and best cards until all other means had been tried. The possibility of being able to start a ruthless U-boat warfare hung like a Damocles' sword over the heads of our adversaries, and would perhaps be a more effectual means of ending the war than the reckless use of the U-boat as a weapon of war, carrying with it the danger of an attack by the neutrals."

* Czernin: "In the World War" (Cassell), p. 122.

There can be no doubt that (as was soon demonstrated) the Austrians had for once the best of the argument, but as Count Czernin says, "Germany had definitely made up her mind to start the campaign in any case." It was, he adds, "one of those instances that prove that when a strong and a weak nation concert in war, the weak one cannot desist unless it changes sides entirely, and enters into war with its former ally. None who were in the Austro-Hungarian Government would hear of that, and with a heavy heart we gave our consent."

The result—a final and fatal illustration of German miscalculation—was almost instantaneous.

A fortnight later—on the 3rd February, 1917—America and Germany broke off relations. In spite of Count Czernin's strenuous but futile efforts the suspension of diplomatic relations between America and Austria followed on the 9th of April.

* * * * * * *

To go back to the spring of 1914, the Kaiser tells us that all this time he was dabbling in Hellenic archæology, with the aid of deferential savants, in the island of Corfu. "The accidental discovery of a relievo head of a Gorgon" near the town of Corfu had led him "to take personal charge of the

work" of excavation. The Gorgon's head had already given rise to "many theories" in learned Germany, and the Kaiser was sanguine enough to believe "that one of the piers for the bridge between Asia and Europe, sought by me" was "assuming shape." He began to prepare a course of lectures to be delivered in Berlin during the winter of 1914-15. "This," he says, "was the kind of subject which in the Spring of 1914 occupied the thoughts of the German Emperor."

O Sancta simplicitas!

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE

Before I part for the moment from Count Czernin, I will quote one more passage from his illuminating book "In the World War" (at p. 185).

"Germany, the leading military Power in the war, never thought for one moment of agreeing to disarmament under international control. After my speech (in favour of general disarmament) at Budapest (in October, 1917) I was received in Berlin, not in an unfriendly manner, but with a sort of pity, as some poor insane person might be treated. The subject was avoided as much as possible. Erzberger alone told me of his complete agreement with me.

"Had Germany been victorious her militarism would have increased enormously. In the summer of 1917 I

spoke to several Generals of high standing on the Western front, who unanimously declared that after the war armaments must be maintained, but on a very much greater scale. They compared this war with the first Punic War."

CHAPTER XIX

MR. PAGE—COLONEL HOUSE *

I HAVE said nothing so far about the part played by the United States in the pre-war situation.

President Wilson who was now in his second year of office was absorbed in domestic questions—the tariff, agriculture, etc.—and in external problems, such as those of Mexico and Panama, which belonged to the Western Hemisphere. He had, however, with a foresight abundantly vindicated by the result, chosen as his Ambassador to England a man with rare endowments both of intellect and character—Mr. Walter Page.

Mr. Page's memory will always be honoured for the splendid service which he rendered in most critical times both to his own country and ours, and which contributed so largely to this ultimate association in the War of the United States with Great

* The references in this chapter are to the "Life and Letters of Walter H. Page," Vol. I, pp. 150-350.

Britain and her allies. He was a lovable man, with a shrewd and penetrating judgment, and by no means a sentimentalist. It took him some little time to understand the English character and English ways, and he was, and always remained, American to the back-bone. In one of his earlier letters after he came here (October, 1913) he writes to the President of Sir Edward Grey: "He'd make a good American with the use of very little sandpaper." Nor did he ever waver in his belief that the ultimate promise of the future lay with the United States. Some months later, when he had had time and opportunity to survey the ground, in a letter to the same correspondent, there is the following passage: "Praise God for the Atlantic Ocean! It is the geographical foundation of our liberties. A civilisation, especially an old civilisation, isn't an easy nut to crack. But I notice that the men of vision keep their thought on us. . . . Our power, our adaptability, our potential wealth, they never forget. They'll hold fast to our favour for reasons of prudence as well as for reasons of kinship. And whenever we choose to assume the leadership of the world, they'll grant it—gradually—and loyally. They cannot become French, and they dislike the

Germans. They must keep in our boat for safety as well as for comfort."

And, again, in the same vein.

"This moss that has grown all over their lives (some of it very pretty and most of it very comfortable, it's soft and warm) is of no great consequence—except that they think they'd die if it were removed. And this state of mind gives us a good key to their character and habits. What are we going to do with this England and this Empire presently when economic prices unmistakably put the leadership of the race in our hands? How can we lead it and use it for the highest purposes of the world and democracy? We can do what we like, if we go about it heartily and with good manners (any man prefers to yield to a gentleman rather than to a rustic) and throw away—gradually—our isolating fears, and alternate boasting and bashfulness."

It is characteristic of Page's genuine sense of humour that he seems to have been thoroughly amused when, in reply to his question "What do we (the Americans) most need to learn from you?" the "gentle and bejeweled nobleman" to whom it was addressed, answered, "If I may speak without offence, modesty."

All this was before the war.

Page's great conception of the best trusteeship that could be devised "for a more efficient and democratic civilisation" was partnership between the

United States, Great Britain, and the British Dominions. "A way," he wrote in August, 1913, "must be found out of this stagnant watching. Else a way will have to be fought out of it, and a great European War would set the Old World, perhaps the whole world, back a long way." * The year 1914 marked the 100th anniversary of the Treaty of Ghent between the United States and Great Britain, and arrangements were already in progress for a great peace celebration in both countries. Mr. Page (as a first step in the development of his plan) pressed the President to come over here, to accept in person the gift of Sulgrave Manor, the old home of the Washingtons. It was only with great reluctance that Mr. Wilson, who was much attracted by the idea, felt constrained to refuse. "The case," he wrote, "against the President's leaving the country is very strong, and I am afraid overwhelming."

The man who in the inner councils of the Government of the United States carried most weight with the isolated President, and enjoyed (so far as anybody did) his full confidence, without holding any official position, was Colonel House, of whom I

* "Life and Letters," Vol. I, p. 272.

may be allowed to say after long and close experience that he combines in an exceptional degree some of the most useful and attractive qualities of statesmanship, coolness of temper, independence of judgment, and complete personal disinterestedness.

The derisory rejection by Germany in 1913 of Mr. Churchill's suggestion of a "Naval holiday" had been necessarily followed by our resolute response to the challenge thrown down by the Navy Law of 1912. Colonel House's extended vision took in the world-wide implications of what no doubt appeared to most Americans at the time to be a merely European problem. As early as December, 1913, we find him writing to his intimate friend and confidant Mr. Page, in reference to a conversation which he had with Sir William Tyrrell of the British Foreign Office, then on a visit to America, in the following terms:

"In my budget of yesterday I did not tell you of the suggestion which I made to Sir W. Tyrrell when he was here, and which I also made to the President. It occurred to me that between us all we might bring about the naval holiday which W. Churchill has proposed. My plan is that I should go to Germany in the Spring and see the Kaiser, and try to win him over to the thought that

is uppermost in our mind and that of the British Government. Sir William thought that there was a good sporting chance of success. He offered to let me have all the correspondence that has passed between the British and German Governments upon this question, so that I might be thoroughly informed as to the position of them both. . . .

"I spoke to the President about the matter, and he seemed pleased with the suggestion: in fact I might say he was enthusiastic. . . . Now I want to get you into the game. If you think it advisable, take the matter up with Sir William Tyrrell, and then with Sir Edward Grey, or directly with Sir Edward if you prefer, and give me the benefit of your advice and conclusions."

In a subsequent letter to Page (January 4th, 1914) Colonel House explains that "the general idea is to bring about a sympathetic understanding between England, Germany and America, not only upon the question of disarmament, but upon other matters of equal importance to them and the world at large."

Page was sceptical from the first as to whether any pact could be come to with Kaiser-ruled Germany. He thought his own scheme safer and more practical, and there is much food for reflection (even in these days) in the remarkable letter which he wrote to Colonel House on January 2nd, 1914. Its material parts are as follows:

"You have set my imagination going. I've been thinking of this thing for months, and now you've given me a fresh start. It can be worked out somehow—doubtless not in this form that anybody may at first see; but experience and frank discussion will find a way. . . .

"The English-speaking peoples now rule the world in all essential facts. They alone and Switzerland have permanent free government. In France there's freedom—but for how long? In Germany and Austria—hardly. In the Scandinavian States—yes, but they are small and exposed as in Belgium and Holland. In the big secure South American States—yes, it's coming. In Japan? Only the British lands and the United States have secure liberty. They also have the most treasure, the best fighters, the most land, the most ships—the future in fact.

"Now because George Washington warned us against alliances, we've gone on as if an alliance were a kind of smallpox. Suppose there were—let us say for argument's sake—the tightest sort of an alliance, offensive and defensive, between all Britain, Colonies and all, and the United States—what would happen? Anything we'd say would go, whether we should say 'Come in out of the wet,' or 'Disarm.' That might be the beginning of a real world-alliance and union to accomplish certain large results—disarmaments for instance, or arbitration—dozens of good things. . . .

"I'm not proposing a programme. I'm only thinking out loud. I see little hope of doing anything so long as we choose to be ruled by an obsolete remark of George Washington's." *

*"Life and Letters," Vol. I, p. 282.

The mission was, however, decided on: "Our friend in Washington," writes Colonel House, "thinks it worth while for me to go to Germany, and that determines the matter." Page cordially approved, and while reiterating his doubts expressed the hope that he might be mistaken. "However," he writes, "you can't ever tell results. . . . The big thing is to go confidently to work on a task, the results of which nobody can possibly foresee. . . . It is in this spirit that very many of the biggest things in history have been done. . . . I applaud your errand, and I am eagerly impatient to hear the result."

Colonel House started on his mission (on board a German liner) and arrived in Berlin in the last week of May, 1914. He met with a cold reception in official circles. "Von Tirpitz made no attempt to conceal his feeling that the purpose of the House mission was extremely distasteful to him." "He bristled with antagonism at any suggestion for peace or disarmament or world co-operation."

Colonel House was disagreeably affected by the whole atmosphere of Berlin. This testimony is of great value as that of a first-hand and highly competent witness as to the actual situation in the Ger-

man capital just two months before the outbreak of War. "The militarist oligarchy was absolutely in control. Militarism possessed not only the army, the navy, the chief officers of state, but the populace as well."

It was only with great difficulty and after many delays that he procured a personal interview with the Kaiser at Potsdam on the 1st June in the Schrippenfest—the great annual festival of the German Army. After the ceremonial luncheon was over (I quote from Mr. Hendrick, Mr. Page's biographer *) "the Kaiser took Colonel House aside, and the two men withdrew to the terrace out of earshot of the rest of the gathering," which included all the Chiefs of the German Army.

Upon few occasions can the ironies of history, with their lights and shades, have been more picturesquely illustrated.

The American Colonel, in "plain citizen's clothes," was charged with the mission of "persuading the Kaiser to abandon everything for which the Schrippenfest stood—to enter an international compact with the United States and Great Britain for reducing armaments . . . and to form some-

* "Life and Letters," Vol. I, p. 282.

thing of a permanent association for the preservation of peace." We can well credit the testimony of on-lookers that the "American was only now and then saying a brief word" while "the Kaiser was doing a vast amount of talking." He occupied most of the time in expatiating on the "Yellow Peril," and declared that there could be no question of disarmament so long as this danger to civilisation existed.

He spoke with contempt of France and Great Britain as possible enemies. His real preoccupation (next to the Yellow Peril) was Russia: how could he join a Peace Pact and reduce his army so long as 175,000,000 Slavs (sic) threatened him on his exposed Eastern frontier? Germany would never accept an arbitration treaty. Without being "outwardly unfriendly" to Colonel House's proposals, he advised him to go first to London and talk over the matter there. "Every nation in Europe" (he concluded) "has its bayonets pointed at Germany: but we are ready."

"The American," Mr. Hendrick tells us, "came away from Berlin with the conviction that the most powerful force in Germany was the militaristic clique, and second the Hohenzollern dynasty. He

has always insisted that this represented the real precedence in power."

Colonel House proceeded to London, and found the statesmen there sympathetic, but so hopeless of the results of the improved state of international relations, and (it may be added) so doubtful of any concession on vital points on the part of Germany, that he felt it would be futile for the moment to prosecute his task.

His visit to London and his conversation there (says Mr. Hendrick) have "great historical value; for the experience afterwards convinced him that Great Britain had had no part in bringing on the European War, and that Germany was solely responsible." *

When after the outbreak of war he expressed to Mr. Page his regret that he had not been encouraged in London to go back to Berlin, Page replied as follows:

"No, no, no—no power on earth could have prevented it. The German militarism which is *the* crime of the last 50 years, has been working for this for 25 years. It is the logical outcome of their spirit and enterprise and doctrine. It *had* to come. . . . Don't let your conscience be worried. You did all that any mortal man

* "Life and Letters," Vol. I, p. 299.

could do. But nobody could have done anything effective."

There are still people who think there was exaggeration if not distortion in the conception which Col. House formed when he was in Berlin of the then well-established domination in Germany of the aims and purposes of the military party. How far the Kaiser with his unstable and impressionable temperament was with them or against them, or (as is more probable) both with and against them in the course of any 24 hours according to the company he kept, it is useless to speculate. They had him in the hollow of their hand. And there can be no more graphic or more candid statement of what the hotter heads intended and believed they were going to do, than is to be found in a letter from the English wife of a German in Bremen—dated in the early weeks of the War, 25th September, 1914, —of which Mr. Page obtained possession:

"Our house here in Bremen has lately been by way of a centre for naval men, and to a less extent, for officers of the neighbouring commands. They are absolutely confident that they will land ten army corps in England before Christmas. It is terrible to know what they mean to go for. They mean to destroy. Every town which remotely is concerned with war material is to be annihi-

lated. Birmingham, Bradford, Leeds, Newcastle, Sheffield, Northampton, are to be wiped out, and the men killed, ruthlessly hunted down. The fact that Lancashire and Yorkshire have held aloof from recruiting is not to save them. The fact that Great Britain is to be a Reichsland will involve the destruction of inhabitants, to enable German citizens to be planted in your country in their place. German soldiers hope that your poor creatures will resist, as patriots should, but they doubt it very much. For resistance will facilitate the process of clearance. Ireland will be left independent, and its harmlessness will be guaranteed by its inevitable civil war."

This, of course, must not be taken too seriously, or as though it represented the forecasts and the plans of the General Staff. But it has a real psychological and historical interest. For it shows how deeply the teaching of Bernhardi and his school had penetrated and suffused the military mind. It had come to believe that war with Great Britain was both inevitable and urgent. And the war so envisaged was to be ruthless in its methods, and to result in her annihilation as a Great Power.

CHAPTER XX

SERAJEVO AND AFTER

Part I: Before the Ultimatum

THE news of the tragedy at Serajevo (28th June, 1914) reached M. Poincaré, as he tells us, in the presidential grand-stand at Longchamp. As he shook hands, on leaving, with M. LaLavary, the Rumanian Minister, "that very shrewd observer of Balkan events" remarked to him with a preoccupied air: "This unhappy event may have very serious consequences." How serious the consequences were to be even the shrewdest observer could not have foreseen. He might have suspected the use that Austria-Hungary would make of the incident. Could he have anticipated the goad which was going to be applied by Germany?

Light has been thrown by many volumes issued since the war on the negotiations and transactions between Berlin and Vienna which were at the time carefully concealed from eyes elsewhere, and one

of the most illuminating is "The Guilt of William Hohenzollern" by Karl Kautsky, of which an English edition has been published by Skeffington. Kautsky was entrusted after the Kaiser's abdication by the People's Commissioners with the collecting and editing of the Berlin Foreign Office documents relating to the outbreak of the war.

More significant even than the original papers which he quotes are the Kaiser's marginal comments. "The Kaiser," as he says, "discards all diplomatic methods of expressing himself. The clearness of his utterances leaves nothing to be desired. And his marginal comments afford the rare satisfaction to people of seeing, for once, an Emperor in undress."

Kautsky shows how after Serajevo, the wrath of Austria, instead of being as formerly directed against Rumania and Serbia combined, was wholly concentrated on the latter, and how William's "dynastic feeling, which had saved Rumania from Austria, now urged Austria as strongly against Serbia." This is unmistakably proved by his notes on the documents.

The German Ambassador in Vienna, Herr von Tschirschky, on June 30th, addressed a report to

the Imperial Chancellor at Berlin. It was submitted to the Kaiser and with his marginal comments was returned to the Foreign Office. "Here," wrote the Ambassador from Vienna, "even serious people are saying that accounts with Serbia must be settled once for all." "Now or never," noted the Kaiser. "A series of demands," continued the Ambassador, "must be presented to Serbia, and in case she does not accept them energetic steps must be taken. I use every occasion of this kind in order to warn our friends quietly, but very emphatically and seriously, against taking any over-hasty steps." Tschirschky was reprimanded for advising moderation. "Who gave him any authority to do that?" ran the Kaiser's comment. "That is very stupid! No affair of his, since it is purely Austria's affair what she thinks fit to do in this matter. . . . Serbia must be settled with and that soon."

As Kautsky says, the idea that Germany was merely dragged into the Serbian crisis in the wake of Austria, in whom she had confided too much, falls wholly to the ground. Tschirschky himself learned his lesson, if indeed he had any lesson to learn. He rapidly became identified, as Sir M. de

Bunsen informed Sir Edward Grey, with extreme anti-Russian and anti-Serbian feeling.

Count Czenin is of opinion that Tschirschky was from the first in favour of war. "I believe," he says, "that Tschirschky was firmly persuaded that in the very near future Germany would have to go through a war against France and Russia, and he considered that the year 1914 would be more favourable than a later date. For this reason, because first of all he did not believe in the fighting capacity of either Russia or France: and secondly because—and this is a very important point—he believed that he could bring the Monarchy (i.e. Austria-Hungary) into this war; while it appeared doubtful to him that the aged and peace-loving Emperor Francis Joseph would draw the sword for Germany or any other occasion where the action would centre less round him. He wished to make use of the Serbian episode so as to be sure of Austria-Hungary in the deciding struggle. That however was his policy, and not Bethmann's." *

There has been a great deal of controversy with regard to the character of the conference and the nature of the decisions taken at Potsdam on July

* "In the World War," p. 11.

5th. That in any case is a portentous and black-letter date in the immediate pre-war record.

On July 4th Count Hoyos, the Austrian Councillor of Legation arrived in Berlin with an autograph letter to the Kaiser from the Emperor Francis Joseph, who wrote: "It must be the future task of my Government to bring about the isolation and diminution of Serbia."

On the 5th of July the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador at Berlin, Count Szögyèny, after lunching with the Kaiser handed him the autograph letter, together with a memorandum from his Government which, according to the German Chancellor, drew up a comprehensive Balkan programme of a far-reaching character.

It has been emphatically denied that there was a meeting of the German Crown Council on this occasion. Bethmann-Hollweg in his own account says that in the afternoon the Kaiser received him and the Under-Secretary of State, Zimmermann, who was representing the Secretary of State, Herr von Jagow, then on leave. This was in the park of the new Palace at Potsdam. "No one else was present," adds the Chancellor, but according to other German records certain military authori-

ties also were received, either that day or the following morning.

A report of the Kaiser's answer to the Austrian documents has been given by the Chancellor in his book. "The Kaiser," he says, "declared that he could not let himself be under any illusion as to the gravity of the position into which the Danube Monarchy had been brought by the Greater Serbia propaganda. It was not our business, however, to advise our ally what it must do in respect of the bloody deed at Serajevo. Austria-Hungary must settle that for itself. We must all the more abstain from any direct action or advice, as we must labour with every means to prevent the Austro-Serbian dispute developing into an international conflict. But the Emperor Francis Joseph must also be given to know that we would not desert Austria-Hungary in its hour of peril. Our own vital interests required the unimpaired maintenance of Austria."

This no doubt represented the Chancellor's own view of what ought to have been said. As Kautsky remarks, "in these discussions Bethmann expressed himself far more cautiously than his Imperial master."

Quite a different impression of the Kaiser's answer was communicated to Vienna by the Austrian Ambassador. In his report on the Potsdam conversation Count Szögyèny wrote: "According to his (the Kaiser's) opinion action must not be delayed too long. Russia will, in any case, take up a hostile attitude, but he had for years been prepared for this; and should it come to a war between Austria-Hungary and Russia, we might be assured that Germany would, with her usual fidelity, be found at our side. Moreover, as matters now stand, Russia is by no means prepared for war, and will think long before appealing to arms. She will, however, stir up the other Entente Powers against us and will fan the flames in the Balkans. He understood very well that His Imperial and Royal Apostolic Majesty, with his well-known love of peace, would find it hard to decide on a march into Serbia; but when we had once recognised the necessity of taking action against Serbia he (Kaiser William) would regret that we should not seize the present favourable moment."

An attempt has been made to discredit the Austrian Ambassador's report by the plea that, an old

and weary man, Count Szögyèny had failed properly to understand the Kaiser. On the other hand the idea that a senile dullard would be retained in such an important position and entrusted with a communication which was, in any reading of it, extremely grave has been very properly ridiculed. The Count's report was in conformity with the temper of the Kaiser's annotations, on his own representative's dispatch from Vienna and is supported by other documents. In a memorandum drawn up three years later by Freiherr von der Bussche, Under-Secretary of State, for Zimmermann, on the "council of military authorities before His Majesty" on July 5th, he records that "it was resolved, in preparation for all emergencies, to take preparatory steps for a war." Lichnowsky learned from the Austrian protocol received in London at the critical conference "the inquiry addressed to us by Vienna found the most uncompromising affirmation from all the leading men present, and in addition it was thought that it would be no harm even if the result should be a war with Russia." Obviously Vienna had no doubt of Germany's attitude.

The day after the conference—if it cannot be

exactly called a Council—of July 5th the Kaiser left for a cruise in Scandinavian waters. "I had," writes Bethmann-Hollweg, "advised him to undertake this journey in order to avoid the attention that would have been aroused by his giving up an outing that he had for years been accustomed to take at this time of year." Planned beforehand the trip now became, as Kautsky holds, "a means to lull Europe into security." "It partook," says M. Poincaré, "of the nature of an alibi prepared in advance by the German Government." On the advice of the Berlin Foreign Office even the Kaiser's customary telegram for the King of Serbia's birthday was dispatched while he was on his cruise.

While comments couched, as Herr von Jagow said, in intentionally mild terms in consideration of European diplomacy, were published in the semi-official organ of the Berlin Government, Austria proceeded to prepare her plans. At a Ministerial Council at Vienna on July 7th, Count Berchtold, the Foreign Minister, stated that Germany had promised without reserve to support Austria in a war against Serbia and that a duel with Serbia might consequently result in a war

with Russia. "It was better that such a war should come at once, as Russia was every day becoming more powerful in the Balkans."

The Council agreed, in deference to Count Tisza, the Hungarian Prime Minister, that mobilisation should not take place until an ultimatum had been presented to Serbia. On the other hand, all present, with the exception of the Hungarian Premier, were of opinion "that a mere diplomatic success, even if it involved a humiliation of Serbia, would be worthless, and that in consequence the demands on Serbia should be of so far-reaching a character that their rejection was to be anticipated; so that the way would be made clear for a radical settlement by military action."

Tschirschky reported to Berlin on July 10th the information supplied to him by Count Berchtold of the audience which the Austrian Minister had with the Emperor Francis Joseph at Ischl. The Minister complained of the attitude of Count Tisza, which made it difficult for him to take energetic measures against Serbia. Count Tisza had maintained that one must proceed in a "gentlemanlike" manner. "Against murderers, after what has taken place?" wrote the Kaiser on the report.

The Hungarian Premier soon recovered the Kaiser's good opinion. Tschirschky telegraphed on July 14th that Count Tisza had called on him. The Count was now convinced of the necessity of war; he added that the unconditional attitude of Germany to the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was decidedly of great influence for the firm stand of the Emperor. The Note to Serbia, he said, would be so drawn up that its acceptance would be practically impossible. "At the close," reported the German Ambassador, "Tisza pressed my hand and said: 'We will now unitedly look the future calmly and firmly in the face.'" "A man, after all!" exclaimed the Kaiser on the margin of the report.

CHAPTER XXI

SERAJEVO AND AFTER

Part II: The Ultimatum

ASSURED of a free hand by Germany, the Austrian Government got ready an Ultimatum which, as Count Tisza anticipated, could not be accepted by a self-respecting state. On July 13th the Sectional Counsellor von Wiesner, who was sent from Vienna to Serajevo to examine the records taken in the judicial inquiry into the crime, telegraphed to Vienna: "Nothing proves complicity of the Serbian Government in carrying out attack, or in its preparation or in supply of arms, and it is not even to be presumed. There are, on the contrary, indications that give reason to consider such complicity as non-existent."

"What cared Austro-Hungary for that?" asks M. Poincaré. She cared nothing. Determined in the words already quoted of the Emperor Francis Joseph to "bring about the isolation and diminu-

tion of Serbia" she pretended to have sufficient evidence against her small neighbour. The fear of Russian intervention did not deter her. Lichnowsky in a note to the German Chancellor on July 16th, deprecating a military castigation of Serbia, remarked that "whether it would be possible to move the Russian Government to take the attitude of a passive onlooker" he had no means of knowing. The Austrians had no reason to assume that Russia would adopt that attitude. But evidently they thought the conditions were favourable to them, and they determined to risk it.

As I have explained in an earlier chapter, internal embarrassments in each of the Entente countries seemed both in Vienna and Berlin to justify the calculation that, if the inevitable war was to take place, now was the time. Baron Beyens, the Belgian Minister, reported from Berlin that in Vienna, as in Berlin, "it was firmly believed that Russia was not in a position to wage a European war, and would not dare to involve herself in so terrible an adventure. The disquieting internal situation, revolutionary machinations, inadequate equipment, poor transport facilities, all these grounds would compel Russia to look on im-

potently at the execution of Serbia. The same poor opinion was held, if not of the French army, yet of the spirit prevailing in the government circles of France."

This description of German and Austrian opinion is, as Kautsky points out, corroborated by the account that Tirpitz gives in his "Reminiscences" of the statements made to his naval representative by the Kaiser on July 6th. The Kaiser considered Russia "at the time was unfit for war, both financially and in a military respect." Furthermore, he assumed that France would put the brake on Russia, in view of the former's unfavourable financial position and lack of heavy artillery. Of England the Kaiser did not speak.

Jagow, in a letter to Lichnowsky on July 18th, took the view that fundamentally Russia was not then prepared for war. "In a few years, according to all competent authorities, Russia will be ready to strike. Then she will crush us with her numbers; then she will have built her Baltic fleet and her strategical railways. . . . I desire no proventive war. But when battle offers we must not run away."

I have already dwelt on our own domestic situ-

ation. "The cry of civil war is on the lips of the most responsible and sober-minded of my people" was the language used by His Majesty at the opening of the Buckingham Palace Conference on July 21st. If the Kaiser thought at all at this stage of the United Kingdom, it was to regard British participation as out of the range of possibility.

On July 20th Sir Edward Grey asked the German Ambassador if he had any news of what was going on in Vienna with regard to Serbia. Prince Lichnowsky replied that he had not, but Austria was certainly going to take some step, and he regarded the situation as very uncomfortable.

Berlin, afraid of hesitation at Vienna, was urging the presentation of the Austrian Ultimatum to Serbia without delay. It was held back, however, until M. Poincaré, the President of the French Republic, then on a visit to the Czar, had left St. Petersburg and was once more on the high seas. What the Austrian Government feared, M. Poincaré thinks, was that if it were presented during his stay in Russia, there might have been an effort at mediation which, if it had occurred at the first moment after the ultimatum was launched, would

have proved more embarrassing to Austria than later efforts were likely to be. Tschirschky, in conveying to Berlin Berchtold's assurance that there was no question of hesitation or irresolution, had said that in the opinion of the Ministerial conference in Vienna it would be a good thing if the "toasting" at St. Petersburg could be got over before the Note was presented.

The visit to Russia of the President of the Republic who was accompanied by the Prime Minister, M. Viviani, had been decided upon several months previously. Describing his interview with the Czar at the Peterhof Palace on July 21st, M. Poincaré says that Nicholas promised to pay a visit to France in the near future. "He had no more idea than myself at that moment that the world was about to be plunged into a cataclysm that would render this project unrealisable." At the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg the same day the French President gave a brief audience to each of the foreign Ambassadors. The Austro-Hungarian Ambassador "while extremely polite, displayed great reserve. . . . In retiring he shook me warmly by the hand, but left with me, in spite of this, the impression that Austria was preparing

'something'—but what? This it was impossible to guess."

On the 23rd, the French visitors re-embarked on board the *France,* "still without information as to Austria's intentions." During the following morning, before they were out of the Gulf of Finland, a summary of the Note to Serbia reached them by wireless telegraphy from the French Embassy at St. Petersburg. The hour fixed for M. Poincaré's departure had been ascertained at Berlin through the General Staff of the German Navy, and communicated to Vienna, with the result that the Note (which was described by the Austrian Ambassador in London, Count Mensdorff, as "not an ultimatum but a *démarche* with a time limit,") was delivered at Belgrade late on the 23rd, at an hour when the news could not reach St. Petersburgh until after the departure of the *France.*

Sir Edward Grey, on being informed on the 24th of the terms of the Ultimatum, said to Count Mensdorff, that he had "never before seen one State address to another independent State a document of so formidable a character." Yet it re-

quired the unconditional acceptance of Austria's demands within 48 hours.

The German Chancellor sent information to the Kaiser, still at sea, through a member of his suite on the 23rd that the Note would be handed to Serbia that evening, and that the time limit would expire on the 25th. He mentioned that President Poincaré would not arrive at Dunkirk until the 31st. "The British Fleet, according to the arrangements made by the Admiralty, will be dispersed on the 27th, and the ships will return to their respective ports. Premature orders to our, i.e. the German, fleet might provoke general uneasiness and arouse British suspicions." British suspicions of what?

It will be convenient at this point to explain the then disposition of the British Fleet.

As far back as October, 1913, Mr. Churchill had determined, mainly on grounds of economy, to substitute in the summer of 1914 for the Grand Manœuvres of the Navy, a less ambitious and costly proceeding—a test mobilisation of the Third Fleet, which consisted of more or less obsolescent ships, manned by Reserve Officers and crews. The object of the experiment was to see whether the

machinery for such a mobilisation was in working order. The proposal was notified to the House of Commons in March: the mobilisation was begun and carried through with satisfactory results on the 15th July, 1914, and the following days: and on the 17th and 18th after the Third Fleet had joined the First and Second at Spithead the King held a review of the whole Navy. I had the honour of being one of His Majesty's guests on the Royal Yacht, and having been for years intimately associated with Mr. McKenna and Mr. Churchill in every stage of their long and arduous task, I can never forget the impression left by the spectacle of the most imposing array ever witnessed of the instruments of naval power. The whole Fleet then steamed to Portland, whence in ordinary course it would have been dispersed in a few days.

The German High Sea Fleet was at the same time cruising in the Norwegian waters.

On the 25th the Kaiser gave the order to his fleet to hold itself in readiness for immediate return. Bethmann-Hollweg conjured him to continue his cruise, but this caused an outburst of wrath on his part. He steamed home to Kiel.

On Sunday, the 26th, M. Poincaré and his com-

panions, after visiting Sweden according to his plan, "were steaming through the open Baltic when a wireless message told us" (he writes) "that the German Emperor had curtailed his cruise and was on his way back to Kiel. In our floating abode, however, we heard only the drowsy echoes of what was happening in the world outside." Next day he decided to abandon the visits to Denmark and Norway which had been in his programme. The news received was still very vague, and was only meagerly supplemented until they landed at Dunkirk on the 29th. The Kaiser had arrived home two days earlier—the 27th.

CHAPTER XXII

SERAJEVO AND AFTER

Part III: German Knowledge of the Ultimatum

WHAT did Germany know of the terms of the Note to Serbia before it was delivered? On the 24th July M. Jules Cambon, French Ambassador at Berlin, after Herr von Jagow had admitted that he approved of the Note, asked him if the Berlin Cabinet had really been entirely ignorant of Austria's requirements before they were communicated to Belgrade, "and as he told me that that was so, I showed him my surprise at seeing him undertake to support claims, of whose limit and scope he was ignorant." Next day the British Chargé d'Affaires received so clear a reply in the negative to a similar question that he was not able to carry the matter further but, like his French colleague, he could not refrain from expressing his surprise at the blank cheque given by Germany to Austria. On the 25th Lichnow-

sky read to Sir Edward Grey a telegram from the German Foreign Office saying that his Government had not known beforehand, and had had no more than other Powers to do with the stiff terms of the Note.

Sir Edward Grey, like other Foreign Ministers, did not receive a copy of the Note till the 24th. On that day the Buckingham Palace Conference broke up, unable to agree as to the boundaries of the area to be excluded from the compulsory operation of the Home Rule Bill. Herr Kautsky states that not only did the German Government know how the ultimatum was to be framed, but that it was in their possession before it was delivered. Tschirschky in Vienna received a copy on the 21st, and this being transmitted by letter, it reached the Foreign Office in Berlin on the afternoon of the 22nd. According to the private information of our Ambassador at Vienna, Tschirschky also telegraphed it to the Kaiser.

Bethmann-Hollweg himself admits: "We did ascertain through Herr von Tschirschky the general lines of the demands that Austria was making on Serbia. Nor did we consider that we could disapprove them in principle." On the other hand,

he denies that they had cognisance of the document at a time when they could have modified it either in form or in tenor. As M. Poincaré however, points out that there would still have been time after it reached Berlin on the afternoon of the 22nd, for the German Government to have telegraphed to Vienna before the final step was taken at Belgrade which was not till the evening of the 23rd. Five years after the event, Bethmann-Hollweg wrote that the Secretary of State communicated to him the text of the ultimatum with the observation that he considered it too severe, and that he himself said the same to the Austrian Ambassador. This was in flat contradiction with what was said officially to the other Powers at the time. In a note communicated by the German Ambassador to Sir Edward Grey on July 24th it was stated that "the course of procedure and demands of the Austro-Hungarian Government can only be regarded as equitable and moderate."

The truth undoubtedly is that instead of attempting to hold Austria back Germany incited and encouraged her to hurry forward. The Austrian Ambassador telegraphed from Berlin on the 25th: "We are advised in the most pressing man-

ner to proceed immediately and place the world in the presence of an accomplished fact." There was no longer any delay. On the 25th, although the reply made by Serbia on the 24th to her Note was on all essential points an acceptance of her demands, Austria broke off diplomatic relations, and on the 28th she declared war. Bethmann-Hollweg draws a distinction between the motives of the various Powers. Russia was, he says, "acting for its expansion," whereas Austria-Hungary made war on Serbia in order to ensure its own survival, and Germany "covered its ally" for the same reason.

CHAPTER XXIII

A CALENDAR

July-August, 1914

AS the sequence of dates is of importance to a full understanding of the situation, the following summary may be found useful:

June 28: Murder of Archduke at Serajevo.
Serbian Government condemn the outrage and are prepared to submit to trial any persons implicated in it.
Austrian Press campaign against Serbia.

July 5: Kaiser receives autograph letter from Emperor Francis Joseph, who is assured, in reply, that Kaiser will take his stand loyally beside Austria.
Conference at Potsdam.

July 6: Kaiser leaves on Scandinavian cruise.

July 7: Council of Austro-Hungarian Ministers. Decide to send ultimatum to Serbia.

July 16: President Poincaré and M. Viviani, Prime Minister of France, leave Dunkirk on visit to Russia and Scandinavian States.

July 17: (Friday) British Fleet at Spithead.

July 18: (Saturday) British Fleet reviewed by the King.

July 20: (Monday) British Fleet goes to Portland for dispersal.

July 21: (Tuesday) Conference, summoned by the King, meets at Buckingham Palace "with the object of discussing outstanding issues in relation to the problem of Irish government."

July 22: (Wednesday) Buckingham Palace Conference.

July 23: (Thursday) Buckingham Palace Conference.

President Poincaré and M. Viviani leave Russia.

Austrian Note presented to Serbia, reply required within 48 hours.

July 24: (Friday) Buckingham Palace Conference, being unable to agree, brings its meetings to a conclusion.

Austria's ultimatum to Serbia communicated to Sir E. Grey.

Sir E. Grey suggests mediation by the four disinterested Powers, Germany, France, Italy and Great Britain.

July 25: (Saturday) Russian Government announce that they are closely following the course of the dispute, to which Russia cannot remain indifferent.

Serbian reply delivered. The Austrian Minister breaks off diplomatic relations, and leaves Belgrade.

July 26: (Sunday) Sir E. Grey sounds Paris, Berlin and Rome on his suggestion that Ambassadors of Germany, France and Italy should meet him in conference.

Austrian mobilisation against Serbia.

Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs begins conversations with Austrian Ambassador and proposes friendly exchange of views with Vienna.

July 27: (Monday) Kaiser arrives at Potsdam.

German Government reject Sir E.

Grey's suggestion of mediation by the four Powers.

Orders by British Government to First Fleet, which is still concentrated at Portland, not to disperse for the present. Vessels of Second Fleet to remain at their home ports in proximity to their balance crews.

Naval debate postponed in House of Commons on account of international situation.

July 28: (Tuesday) Austria declares war on Serbia and hostilities begin.

Austria declines Russian suggestion that the means of settling the conflict should be discussed between St. Petersburg and Vienna, and also declines negotiations with Powers on basis of Serbian reply; her quarrel with Serbia is "purely an Austrian concern."

July 29: (Wednesday) Bombardment of Belgrade begins.

Russian Government announce mobilisation in four southern conscriptions.

President Poincaré arrives in Paris.

Sir E. Grey warns German Ambassador not to count on England standing aside in all circumstances.

Germany makes bid for British neutrality.

Sir E. Grey presses for mediating influence by any method acceptable to Germany.

Prime Minister in House of Commons: "The situation is one of extreme gravity."

The First Fleet leaves Portland Roads for Scapa Flow.

"Precautionary Period" regulations put in force.

July 30: (Thursday) Home Rule Amending Bill indefinitely postponed in order that "the nation should present a united front."

Prime Minister: "The issues of peace and war are hanging in the balance."

Sir E. Grey refuses German bid for British neutrality.

Germany, asked for reply as to medi-

ation, says time will be saved by her communicating with Vienna direct.

Austria resumes conversations with Russia.

July 31: (Friday) Austria and Russia order general mobilisation.

Germany proclaims *Kriegsgefahr*—(imminence of war).

Conversations proceeding between Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Austrian Ambassador at St. Petersburg.

German ultimatum to Russian Government requiring them to countermand mobilisation within twelve hours.

German Ambassador at Paris requires M. Viviani to say next day what attitude of France would be, in event of war with Russia.

Bank of England raises its discount rate from 4 to 8 per cent.

Stock Exchange closed sine die.

August 1: (Saturday) Germany orders general mobilisation.

Germany declares war on Russia, her demand not having been complied with.

France orders general mobilisation.

France replies to German challenge that she will have regard to her own interests.

Bank rate raised to 10 per cent.

August 2 (Sunday) Germany and Russia in a state of war.

German ultimatum to Belgium.

German troops enter Grand Duchy of Luxemburg.

Sir E. Grey gives to French Ambassador assurance of protection of French Northern and Western coasts and shipping against hostile operations by German Fleet.

Mobilisation ordered of British Fleet.

Appeal of King of Belgium to King George.

Cabinet decision.

August 3: (Monday) Bank holiday. Germany declared war on France.

Belgium rejects Germany's ultimatum.

Sir E. Grey's speech in House of Commons declaring policy of Government.

Bill passed through both Houses empowering Government to declare a general moratorium.

August 4: (Tuesday) German Government inform Belgium they will carry out, if necessary, by force of arms, the measures they consider indispensable.

Belgian territory invaded by German troops.

British Government, in ultimatum to Germany, demand an assurance that neutrality of Belgium will be respected: an answer required by midnight.

German Government refuse the required assurance.

A state of war exists between Great Britain and Germany from 11 p.m.

CHAPTER XXIV

SIR EDWARD GREY'S EFFORTS FOR PEACE

Part I: Mediatory Negotiations

TO fix the ultimate responsibility for the war a study of the officially published diplomatic correspondence is in itself still sufficient. The dispatches reveal with a dramatic interest rarely attained by such papers the motives, emotions, and designs of the Central Powers, which were sweeping them, in spite of all the efforts of all the peacemakers, towards the catastrophe of which Sir Edward Grey warned the world. Blue-books are commonly supposed to be dry-as-dust, but the note of impending tragedy running through this collection of diplomatic documents presented to Parliament at the time, appeals to the deepest instincts of the reader. Considerable additions have since come to light to the notes and dispatches which rushed so rapidly across Europe and have filled in the pictures with fresh lights and shades. But they

have left even less doubt than existed before as to the true apportionment of responsibility.

Sir Edward Grey, as soon as he learnt the terms of the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia, initiated mediatory negotiations. The merits of the dispute between the two countries were not the concern of His Majesty's Government. He "concerned himself with the matter simply and solely from the point of view of the peace of Europe." To maintain peace was the object on which he concentrated his unswerving and unflagging efforts. He pursued it from first to last with unsurpassed patience and assiduity.

Complaint was made in Berlin that the British Minister did nothing to localise the conflict. That was the professed object of Germany. Her demand, implied nothing less than that in future Austria alone was to have any effective say in the Balkans. Russia was faced with the alternative either to submit, as she had submitted two years before or to prevent the subjugation of a State in whose interests she was intimately concerned. If she intervened by arms she was to be resisted by Austria's ally. As Sir Edward Grey said: "The moment the dispute ceases to be one between Aus-

tro-Hungary and Serbia and becomes one in which another great Power is involved, it can but end in the greatest catastrophe that has ever befallen the Continent at one blow." His single aim was to avert that catastrophe.

Bethmann-Hollweg has since alleged that Germany "earnestly advocated in Vienna the acceptance of the mediation desired by Grey, and in spite of the strongest pressure failed." Kautsky, after his examination of the documents in the Berlin Foreign Office, asserts that "Austria rejected all mediation proposals that were made, none of which emanated from Germany. The latter was satisfied with simply transmitting the proposals of others, or else refusing them at the very outset as incompatible with Austria's independence. Even the most urgent questioning could not lure a proposal from her, whilst England and Russia vied with each other in trying to find a way out of the muddle."

Szögyèny, the Austrian Ambassador at Berlin, telegraphs to Berchtold: "State Secretary declared to me explicitly in strict confidence that England's proposals for mediation would very shortly be brought to the cognisance of Your Ex-

cellency by the German Government. The German Government most explicitly states that it in no way identifies itself with these proposals, is even decidedly against their consideration, and transmits them only in deference to the request of England." Once more the aged Ambassador, at a later date and when the war was in progress, was given the lie. Bethmann-Hollweg and Jagow both declared to a commission that his dispatch could not possibly be correct. This is on a par with their repudiation of his account of the Kaiser's reply to the Emperor Francis Joseph's letter on July 5th. Whatever may have been his age and his infirmities, there is no reason to believe that he was incapable of understanding what was said to him on the most vital affairs—still less that he was capable of inventing what was deliberately untrue.

The negotiations, so familiar to most readers, require only a brief outline. On July 24th, the day after the Austrian Ultimatum was delivered, Sir Edward Grey put forward the suggestion that the Four Powers—Germany, France, Italy and Great Britain—none of which had direct interests in Serbia, should act together for the sake of peace, simultaneously in Vienna and St. Petersburg.

Next day Lichnowsky expressed himself as personally favourable to mediation, and Jagow stated in Berlin that if the relations between Austria and Russia became threatening, he was quite ready to fall in with the proposal that the Four Powers should work "in favour of moderation." On the 26th, after the Austrian Minister had left Belgrade, and our Ambassador at Vienna had reported that war was thought to be imminent, Sir E. Grey went a step further, and proposed that the representatives of the Four Powers should meet in London immediately for the purpose of devising means for preventing further complications. France and Italy promptly agreed, and Sazanof, on behalf of Russia, intimated that, if direct explanations with Vienna were to prove impossible, he was ready to accept this or any other method that would bring about a peaceable solution.

The situation was not in itself more difficult, nor did it seem—after the Serbian reply on July 24th to the Austrian Ultimatum, in which every essential point was conceded—less susceptible of accommodation, than that which had been successfully handled by similar procedure in 1912-13.

The German Ambassador assured Sir E. Grey

on the 27th that his Government accepted "in principle" mediation between Austria and Russia by the four Powers, reserving, of course, their right as an ally to help Austria if attacked. Either he was misinformed as to the real attitude of the German Government, or a sudden change came over the atmosphere in Berlin. For the same day Sir Edward Goschen, our Ambassador there, telegraphed to Grey: "Secretary of State says that conference you suggest would practically amount to a court of arbitration and could not, in his opinion, be called together except at the request of Austria and Russia. He could not therefore fall in with your suggestion, desirous though he was to co-operate for the maintenance of peace."

Bethmann-Hollweg writes in his book: "The French take the view that after the Kaiser's return (on Monday the 27th) there was a change for the worse in tone. I saw nothing of the kind, though I was in constant personal touch with the Kaiser. Quite the reverse; he would not hear of any step being omitted that might be conducive to peace. Our strong pressure on Vienna corresponded with his innermost conviction."

This presentation of the Kaiser's attitude is completely at variance with the contemporary documents. On Lichnowsky's report of Sir E. Grey's suggestion that the four Powers should undertake negotiation between Russia and Austria the Emperor wrote: "This is superfluous, as Austria has already made matters clear to Russia, and Grey can propose nothing else. I am not intervening—only if Austria expressly asks me to, which is not probable. One does not consult others in matters of honour and vital questions."

According to Bethmann-Hollweg's own argument the proposal for an Ambassadors' Conference was "an attempt of the Triple Entente to bring the dispute before the tribunal of Europe or rather before that of the Entente." Every possible endeavour was made by Sir E. Grey to dispel any such misapprehension or misrepresentation of the proposal and to commend it to Austria's ally, whose co-operation he considered essential. The Conference, he explained, "would not be an arbitration, but a private and informal discussion to ascertain what suggestion could be made for a settlement. No suggestion would be put forward that had not

previously been ascertained to be acceptable to Austria and Russia, with whom the mediating Powers could easily keep in touch through their respective Allies."

CHAPTER XXV

SIR EDWARD GREY'S EFFORTS FOR PEACE

Part II: Obduracy of Austria

THE idea of a Conference was temporarily kept in reserve while an effort—encouraged by Sir E. Grey, who urged that Austria should not meantime precipitate military action—was made to promote direct negotiations between Austria and Russia. Austria would accept no discussion with the Powers on the merits of the dispute between herself and Serbia, and in this uncompromising attitude she was to say the least not discouraged by Germany's apologetic manner of transmitting Grey's suggestions and inviting her views on Sazonof's desire for direct negotiation. "If we reject every mediatory movement," said the Chancellor in a telegram to Tschirschky, "it will have the effect of making impossible our position in the country where we must appear in the light of having the war forced on us."

It seemed for a moment as though direct conversations with Russia might be less disagreeable to Austria than European intervention but the proposal came to nothing. The suggestion of the Russian Government that the means of settling the conflict should be discussed between Sazonof and the Austrian Ambassador at St. Petersburg was, in fact, declined by Vienna on the 28th. Austria refused to delay her military action. She declared war on Serbia on the same day (the 28th) and immediately thereafter began to bombard Belgrade.

Her despatch of troops to the front was followed by mobilisation by Russia in her four southern conscriptions. Information of this partial mobilisation was given in pacific and frank terms to Germany. It was directed only against Austria and was intended, as the Tsar's representative at Vienna informed Sir M. de Bunsen, as a clear intimation that Russia must be consulted regarding the fate of Serbia.

Proposals for mediation by the four Powers were therefore at once resumed by Sir E. Grey, and pressed in every available quarter with the utmost urgency. He was ready, as he informed Berlin on

the 28th, to propose that the German Secretary of State should suggest the lines on which the principle of mediation should be applied. "The whole idea of mediation or mediating influence," he said in a telegram to our Ambassador on the 29th, "was ready to be put into operation by any method that Germany could suggest, if mine was not acceptable." In fact mediation was ready to come into operation "by any method that Germany thought possible if only Germany would 'press the button' in the interests of peace." His offers, suggestions and appeals, fully supported by France, were fruitless.

Bethmann-Hollweg has asserted that Germany "could not save peace because St. Petersburg was recalcitrant. And St. Petersburg refused because England did not curb its bellicosity." Not only did England endeavour to curb bellicosity wherever her influence could reach, but Russia continued to express her own desire for peace if that could be secured consistently with her duty and interests. Sazonof stated on the 29th that any arrangement approved by France and England for a conference would be acceptable to him "and he did not care what form such conversations took." "Down

to the last moment," he assured the French Ambassador on the 30th, "I will negotiate."

A remarkable letter, published after the war in the *Deutsche Politik,* was addressed by the Kaiser to Bethmann-Hollweg, on the 28th. The Kaiser practically admitted that, with the Serbian capitulation, every reason for war fell to the ground; but he went on to say that, in order that the fine promises and undertakings of the Serbs might be made good, it would be necessary for Austria to exercise a *douce violence* by a temporary military occupation of a part of their country. This, he held, was also necessary in order to afford to the Army an external *satisfaction d'honneur* which he declared to be "a preliminary condition of my mediation." This was the man who has subsequently represented himself as a mediator whose efforts had been frustrated.

The sentiment expressed by the Kaiser was shared by the German Chancellor. On the 29th, he informed Sir Edward Goschen, that he had despatched a message to Vienna, in which "he explained that, although a certain desire had, in his opinion, been shown in the Serbian reply to meet the demands of Austria, he understood entirely

that, without some sure guarantees that Serbia would carry out in their entirety the demands made upon her, the Austro-Hungarian Government could not rest satisfied in view of their past experience." He advised them, however, to speak openly in the sense, already conveyed to Russia, that they had no territorial designs. On this point Sir E. Grey's comment, to the Austrian Ambassador, was that it would be quite possible, without nominally interfering with the independence of Serbia or taking away any of her territory, to turn her into a sort of vassal State.

"It had, of course," as Lichnowsky subsequently wrote, "needed but a hint from Berlin to induce Count Berchtold to be satisfied with a diplomatic success. But this hint was not given. On the contrary the war was hurried on." (It was urged on by the advice of the Kaiser and the Chancellor with regard to the necessity of guarantees.) Lichnowsky recorded that "the impression is becoming more and more firmly established that we wanted the war in any circumstances. No other interpretation could be placed upon our attitude in a question that did not concern us directly at all. The earnest pleadings and definite declarations of M. Sazonof,

later on the positively humble telegrams of the Tsar, Sir Edward Grey's repeated proposals, the warnings of the Marquis San Giuliano and Signor Bollati, my urgent advice—all were useless."

CHAPTER XXVI

SIR EDWARD GREY'S EFFORTS FOR PEACE

Part III: Germany Precipitates the Conflict

THE attempt personally to influence the Tsar" was, according to Bethmann-Hollweg's book, the consequence of the Kaiser's own initiative in his telegram of the 29th. It has been shown, however, that before the Kaiser's telegram—although prepared two or three hours earlier—was despatched from Berlin, early in the morning of the 29th, a telegram had arrived from the Tsar imploring William in the name of their old friendship to prevent his ally from going too far. The Kaiser's telegram was to the effect that if Russia mobilised against Austria his position as mediator would become impossible. Nicholas replied that the military measures put into operation by Russia were taken solely by way of defence against Austria's preparations. He suggested the submission of the Austro-Serbian dispute to the Hague Con-

ference, but the Chancellor telegraphed to the German Ambassador that that would be out of the question. From the exchange of telegrams, as the French Ambassador at St. Petersburg stated, the Tsar had received the impression that Germany did not wish to pronounce at Vienna the decisive word which would safeguard peace.

On the 30th there were symptoms of a momentary détente, and Germany seemed at last to be disposed to tender conciliatory advice. Perhaps she was influenced by the warning, given by Sir E. Grey to Lichnowsky, that Germany must not count upon Great Britain standing aside in all circumstances. "Faced with a conflagration in which England might go against them, and, according to all indications, Italy and Roumania, not with them," the German Government represented to Vienna the danger of the refusal of any interchange of opinion with St. Petersburg. The Austrian Cabinet, while refraining from going into the merits of the English proposal, decided to "show complaisance in the form of its reply." Another telegram from Béthmann-Hollweg was sent off on the evening of the 30th urgently recommending Austria to accept Grey's proposal; otherwise it

would be hardly possible any longer to shift the guilt of the conflagration on to Russia. This telegram was however cancelled.

There were, as this momentary wavering shows, two currents of influence at Berlin, the political and the military. "Two conflicting tendencies," says Kautsky, "were fighting for the decision which depended on the unstable Kaiser." As the Under-Secretary of State informed an Ambassador, the military authorities were very anxious that mobilisation should be ordered, because delay made Germany lose some of her advantages.

Early on the morning of the 30th, the German Ambassador at St. Petersburg had an interview with the Foreign Minister and "completely broke down on seeing that war was inevitable." He appealed to M. Sazonof to make some suggestion which he could telegraph to his Government as a last hope and M. Sazonof drew up a conciliatory formula as follows:

"If Austria, recognising that her conflict with Serbia has assumed the character of a question of European interest, declares herself ready to eliminate from her ultimatum points which violate principle of sovereignty of Serbia, Russia engages to

stop all military preparations." The same day Sir E. Grey suggested that if the Austrian advance were stopped after the occupation of Belgrade, he thought the Russian Minister's formula might be changed to read, that the Powers would examine how Serbia could fully satisfy Austria without impairing Serbian sovereign rights or independence. The formula was amended in accordance with this proposal.

On July 31st, Russia and Austria mobilised against each other. Conflicting statements were issued as to which Power took the first step in substituting general for partial mobilisation. Austria, according to her intimation, was "compelled to respond" to Russian action. On the other hand the Russian order was described at St. Petersburg, "as a result of the general mobilisation of Austria and of the measures for mobilisation taken secretly, but continuously by Germany for the last six days." Bethmann-Hollweg has asserted that the statement regarding German measures was an invention. Secret mobilisation, he says, was out of the question in Germany. An extra edition of the *Berlin Lokalanzeiger* on the 30th "falsely" reported that the German army had been mobilised. "So far as

could be ascertained from the official inquiry that was at once instituted, it appeared that employés of this paper had been instigated by quite unconscionable excess of professional zeal." A curious explanation!

On the eve of the war the tension between Russia and Germany was much greater than between Austria and Russia. "As between the latter," wrote our Ambassador at Vienna, "an arrangement seemed almost in sight." On the evening of the 31st, the Austrian Ambassador in Paris announced that his Government had officially advised Russia that it had no territorial ambition, and that it would not touch the sovereignty of the State of Serbia. Discussions, as Sir E. Grey learned with great satisfaction, were being resumed between Vienna and St. Petersburg. He still believed "that it might be possible to secure peace if only a little respite in time can be gained before any Great Power begins war." Austria at any rate was apparently anxious to remove the impression that she had banged the door on compromise or on conversations. "Unfortunately," as Sir M. de Bunsen wrote, "these conversations at St. Petersburg and Vienna were cut short by the transfer of the dispute to the more

dangerous ground of a direct conflict between Germany and Russia. Germany intervened by means of her double ultimatums to St. Petersburg and Paris."

Meantime there was a final exchange of telegrams between the Tsar and the Kaiser. In a telegram on the 31st the Tsar gave his solemn word that as long as the negotiations continued his troops would undertake no provocative action. This message crossed one from the Kaiser who said it rested in the hand of the Tsar by discontinuing military preparations to avert the misfortune which threatened the entire civilised world.

Germany intimated the same day that "the state of danger of war," which she had then declared, would be followed by general mobilisation, if Russia did not undertake within twelve hours to demobilise. It was remarkable that, just when Russia and Austria were ready to converse, the German Government should have presented this ultimatum. The compiler of the German White Book states that, although no reply to it was ever received in Berlin, two hours after the expiration of the time limit on the first of August the Tsar telegraphed to the Kaiser recognising Germany's right to mobi-

lise, but requesting from him the same guarantee which he himself had given to William—that the mobilisation measures did not mean war. The Kaiser, in reply, declined to enter upon that subject but asked the Tsar without delay to order his troops not to commit under any circumstances "the slightest violation of our frontiers." This telegram did not reach the Tsar till after the Note declaring war had been handed by the German Ambassador to the Russian Government.

The reason of the haste has been confessed. Bethmann-Hollweg writes, "We were not in complete agreement among ourselves as to how we were to proceed officially. The War Minister, General von Falkenhayn, thought it was a mistake to declare war on Russia, because he feared that the political effect would be prejudicial to us. The Chief of the General Staff, General von Moltke, was on the other hand in favour of declaring war . . . because our hope of success . . . was dependent on the extreme rapidity of our movements. I myself agreed with the view of General von Moltke."

The appropriate comment was made by Sir M.

de Bunsen in his survey of the negotiations at Vienna. "A few days' delay might in all probability," he said, "have saved Europe from one of the greatest calamities in history!"

CHAPTER XXVII

THE EVE OF THE WAR

IT has been contended that war between the Great Powers might have been avoided if Sir Edward Grey had from the outset made our own position clear, and shown that we were prepared to take action by the side of France and Russia. This contention, repeated by political critics at home after the event, was naturally put forward during the negotiations. Immediately after the presentation of the Austrian Ultimatum to Serbia, M. Sazonof urged, in conversation with Sir George Buchanan, that we should proclaim our complete solidarity with Russia and France. He went so far as to say that if we took our stand firmly with them there would be no war.

Our Ambassador at once made the right answer. Direct British interests in the Serbian-Austrian controversy were nil. Our only object was to secure mediation, and "England could play the rôle

of mediator at Berlin and Vienna to better purpose as a friend who, if her counsels of moderation were disregarded, might one day be converted into an ally, than if she were to declare herself Russia's ally at once." Later, when Sazonof again questioned him the Ambassador, whose attitude was warmly approved by Sir E. Grey, told the Russian Minister that he was mistaken if he believed that the cause of peace could be promoted by our announcing to the German Government that they would have to deal with us as well as with Russia and France if Germany supported Austria by force of arms. "Their attitude (he said) would merely be stiffened by such a menace, and we could only induce Germany to use her influence at Vienna to avert war by approaching her in the capacity of a friend who was anxious to preserve peace."

I may say here, by way of parenthesis, that we were singularly fortunate in these critical days, in having as our representatives at Berlin, Vienna and St. Petersburg, these diplomatists so qualified to handle a situation of almost unexampled difficulty, by long experience, trained insight, and complete understanding both of the aims and

methods of British policy, as Sir E. Goschen, Sir M. de Bunsen, and Sir G. Buchanan.

No evidence of any value has been or can be adduced to prove that a threatening or even an uncompromising attitude on our part would have turned Germany and Austria from the path on which they had entered. On the contrary, the evidence is all the other way. Bethmann-Hollweg himself has ridiculed the idea that Germany made a miscalculation in counting in all events on English neutrality. "This," he writes, "is one of those misrepresentations that are common in political controversy, even when they run counter to facts." His attempts at an understanding with England which he "began with his entry into office and continued regardless of failure" showed, as he asserts, that he "realised the English peril at least as well as those whose noisy naval policy was only aggravating the evil."

Our position was, from the first, made clear enough. Sir E. Grey stated plainly to the German Ambassador on July 27th that if Germany assisted Austria against Russia, other issues might be raised which would supersede the local dispute between Austria and Serbia. Other Powers would

be brought in, and the war "would be the biggest ever known." The Russian Ambassador Count Benckendorff on the other hand deprecated the effect that must be produced by the impression that in any event we should stand aside. This impression, Grey pointed out, ought to be dispelled by the orders which were given on Sunday the 26th to the Fleet, then still concentrated at Portland, not to disperse as had been intended on Monday, for manœuvre leave. While abstaining from any threat, he mentioned that fact also to the Austrian Ambassador "as an illustration of the anxiety that was felt."

On the 29th although, as he explained to M. Paul Cambon, the Government had not decided what to do in a contingency which he still hoped might not arise, he told Lichnowsky in a quite private and friendly way what was in his mind. This is the gist of what he said: "There would be no question of our intervening if Germany was not involved, or even if France was not involved. But we knew very well that if the issue did become such that we thought British interests required us to intervene, we must intervene at once, and the de-

cision would have to be very rapid, just as the decisions of other Powers had to be."

"I hoped that the friendly tone of our conversations would continue as at present, and that I should be able to keep as closely in touch with the German Government in working for peace. But if we failed in our efforts to keep the peace, and if the issue spread so that it involved practically every European interest, I did not wish to be open to any reproach from him that the friendly tone of all our conversations had misled him or his Government into supposing that we should not take action, and that, if they had not been so misled, the course of things might have been different."

Sir E. Grey, indeed, had through all the earlier phases and stages of these negotiations, with the governing purpose of preserving peace, to follow two distinct though parallel lines:

(1) to make Germany realise that Great Britain might come in.

(2) to make it clear to France and Russia that we were free either to come in or to keep out.

Notwithstanding Bethmann-Hollweg's denial that Germany counted on English neutrality, Sir

E. Grey's warning words to Lichnowsky excited the anger of the Kaiser, which finds expression in his marginal comments on the Ambassador's report of the conversation. "The greatest and most scandalous piece of English Pharisaism," he wrote, "that I have ever seen!" At the mention of Grey's wish to be spared the subsequent reproach of insincerity, his comment is: "Aha! the low scoundrel! He has been insincere all these years down to his latest speech." "Most mean and Mephistophelean! But genuinely English."

On July 29th what Sir E. Goschen described as a "strong bid" was made at Berlin for British neutrality. It was a singularly maladroit manœuvre. The Chancellor who "had just returned from Potsdam," sent for our Ambassador to tell him that, provided the neutrality of Great Britain were certain, every assurance would be given that Germany aimed at no territorial acquisition at the expense of France. When, however, Sir E. Goschen questioned him about the French colonies he was "unable to give a similar undertaking in that respect." Apparently his undertaking would not have covered even the case of Morocco. He added that so long as others respected the neu-

trality of the Netherlands Germany would do likewise. As to Belgium, when the war was over, her integrity would be safeguarded if she had not sided against Germany.

The Chancellor trusted that these assurances might form the basis of the understanding which he so much desired. He had in mind, as Sir E. Goschen reported, "a general neutrality agreement between England and Germany, though it was of course at the present moment too early to discuss details." In preparing a memorandum of his declaration the Chancellor seems to have experienced some difficulty, and drafted no less than three versions. In one of them he coupled a general treaty of neutrality with a "naval understanding." The naval allusion, however, at once disappeared. In fact the Kaiser in his comments on Lichnowsky's dispatch had written: "I shall never make a naval agreement with such rascals."

It is needless to say that the British Government would not for a moment entertain the idea of neutrality on any such terms. Sir E. Grey spurned the suggestion. It would, he said, be a disgrace for us to make such a bargain, "a disgrace from which the good name of this country would

never recover." Neither could we traffic away our treaty obligations to Belgium.

The one way of maintaining the good relations between England and Germany, Grey instructed our Ambassador to say to the Chancellor, was that they should continue to work together to preserve the peace of Europe. "If the peace of Europe can be preserved, and the present crisis safely passed, my own endeavour will be to promote some arrangement to which Germany could be a party, by which she could be assured that no aggressive or hostile policy would be pursued against her or her allies by France, Russia and ourselves, jointly or separately. I have desired this and worked for it, as far as I could, through the last Balkan crisis, and, Germany having a corresponding object, our relations sensibly improved. The idea has hitherto been too Utopian to form the subject of definite proposals, but if this present crisis, so much more acute than any that Europe has gone through for generations, be safely passed, I am hopeful that the relief and reaction which will follow may make possible more definite rapprochement between the Powers than has been possible hitherto."

This struck the key-note of British policy.

Germany's response was to declare war on Russia, and on the eve of presenting the ultimatum at St. Petersburg she addressed a further challenge to France.

Her designs on her Western neighbour were not fully disclosed at the time. We have seen that the self-denying undertaking she was prepared to give in order to buy our neutrality did not extend to France's colonies. Yet another sinister proposal (as is now known) lay hidden in her secret instructions to her ambassador in Paris.

The Ambassador, Baron von Schoen, on July 31st, asked M. Viviani (who had fully gathered up the threads of diplomacy on his return with M. Poincaré two days previously from the voyage to Russia) what the attitude of France would be in the event of war between Germany and Russia. He was to call next day for the answer. M. Viviani naturally replied at once that France would have regard to her own interests. Baron von Schoen, in fact, on calling on the following morning, said of his own accord that her attitude was not doubtful. He mentioned that he had packed up.

The telegram from the German Chancellor on

which the Ambassador in Paris acted was published to the world only during the war. It contained in a specially complicated and secret cipher an instruction which it could not have been agreeable for any diplomatist to carry out, who had either respect for the honour of his own country, or consideration for the State to which he was accredited. It was as follows: "If the French Government declares that it will remain neutral, your Excellency will be good enough to inform it that, as guarantee of this neutrality, we must insist on the handing over to us of the fortresses of Toul and Verdun, which we shall occupy, and which we shall restore after the completion of the war against Russia."

"That," says M. Poincaré, "was the reward that was to be offered to us in the event of our repudiating our Alliance with Russia." The proposed demand was worthy of the authors of the suggestion already made to Great Britain. It is significant of the psychology of the directors of German policy that they could have imagined that a proud country, even if tempted, as France never was tempted, to desert an Ally, could have entertained a demand to hand over her fortresses as a pledge of her good

faith and to place herself at the mercy of the Power which was engaged in the meantime in crushing that Ally.

Bethmann-Hollweg, referring in his book to the incident, writes of French neutrality as an unlikely event. He accounts for the proposal regarding the fortresses by saying: "If France had actually given a declaration of neutrality, we should have had to expect that the French Army would have completed their preparations in every detail, under the protection of an apparent neutrality, so as the better to fall upon us at such time as we might be deeply involved in the East. We had to have good guarantees against this, and our military authorities considered that an occupation of Toul and Verdun for the war would have sufficed."

But of all Germany's offers to extort or to buy neutrality her offer to Belgium was the most amazing and audacious. While France, in response to Sir E. Grey's inquiry, immediately renewed her engagement to respect Belgian neutrality, Germany declined to give the same assurance. What she did was to present an ultimatum at Brussels, intimating her intention to enter Belgian territory, offering the maintenance of friendly neutrality on

the condition of free passage to her troops, and threatening in the event of refusal to consider Belgium as an enemy.

It was this, her deliberate menace to the independence and integrity of that state, followed as it was by the moving appeal of King Albert to King George, which finally determined the action of the British Cabinet, and the attitude of the British people. Speaking in the House of Commons on July 30th, when there was still a hope of peace, and I was asking the House to postpone the Irish Amending Bill, I used these words:

> "It is of vital importance that this country, which has no interests of its own directly at stake, should present a united front, and be able to speak and to act with the authority of an undivided nation."

It is useless to speculate upon what might have happened had Germany avoided the fatal blunder of the Belgian violation. But it is certain that the British nation could not then have gone into war with a united front.

It is well to recall the language used by Sir E. Grey to our Ambassador in Paris, before it was yet clear that the outrage on Belgium was a certainty: "Up to the present moment," he wrote, "we

did not feel, and public opinion did not feel, that any treaties or obligations of this country were involved. Further developments might alter this situation, and cause the Government and Parliament to take the view that intervention was justified. The preservation of the neutrality of Belgium might be, I would not say, a decisive but an important factor in determining our attitude."

As late as the 1st August he said to the German Ambassador:

"Our hands are still free. Our attitude will be determined largely—I will not say entirely—by the question of Belgium, which appeals very strongly to public opinion here."

On the 2nd of August the French Ambassador in London writes to his Government: "The protection of Belgian neutrality is here considered so important that Great Britain will regard its violation by Germany as a *casus belli*. It is a specially British interest and there is no doubt that the British Government, faithful to the traditions of their policy, will insist upon it, even if the business world, in which German influence is making tenacious efforts, exercises pressure to prevent the Government committing itself against Germany."

On the 3rd August, in his speech in the House of Commons, after stating that news had just reached him of the German ultimatum to Belgium, Sir E. Grey dealt at length with the history and character of our obligations to Belgium. He cited among other authorities Mr. Gladstone's words:

"We have an interest in the independence of Belgium which is wider than that which we may have in the literal operation of the guarantee. It is found in the answer to the question whether under the circumstances of the case this country, endowed as it is with influence and power, would quietly stand by and witness the perpetration of the direst crime that ever stained the pages of history and thus become participators in the sin."

Sir E. Grey proceeded to show that now not only the sanctity of Treaties but the independence of the smaller States had been directly put in issue.

German troops crossed the Belgian frontier on the morning of the fourth of August. An ultimatum was forthwith sent to Berlin by His Majesty's Government. "Just for a scrap of paper," said the German Chancellor to our Ambassador, "Great Britain was going to make war on a kindred nation who desired nothing better than to be friends with her."

The expression "a scrap of paper," as its author

admits, was perhaps an indiscretion, but he pleads that his blood boiled at Goschen's "hypocritical harping on Belgian neutrality, which was not the thing that had driven England into war." At the same time in his book he throws on the Army the responsibility for the fatal step.

"Military opinion," he writes, "held that a condition of success for the Western offensive was passage through Belgium. Herein, political and military interests came into sharp conflict. The offence against Belgium was obvious, and the general political consequences of such an offence were in no way obscure. The chief of the General Staff, General von Moltke, was not blind to this consideration but declared that it was a case of absolute military necessity. I had to accommodate my view to his. . . . The ultimatum to Belgium was consequently the political execution of a decision that was considered militarily indispensable. But I also stand by what I said on the 4th August when I admitted our offence, and at the same time adduced our dire need as both compelling and condoning it."

By what we in this country said and did on the 3rd and 4th of August we also stand. Bethmann-Hollweg quotes in a summary form from a speech

delivered in the House of Commons two days later by myself, whom he describes as a "practical politician": "If I am asked what we are fighting for I can reply in two sentences. In the first place we are fighting to fulfil a solemn international obligation . . . secondly we are fighting to vindicate the principle that small nationalities are not to be crushed, in defiance of international good faith, by the arbitrary will of a strong and overmastering Power."

That was the British *casus belli.*

This chapter may fitly conclude with the account based on a memorandum made by Mr. Page, which is given by Mr. Page's biographer of the interview between the American Ambassador and the Foreign Secretary on the afternoon of the day (August 4th) on which the British Ultimatum was sent.

The meeting took place at three o'clock on Tuesday afternoon, August 4th—a fateful date in modern history. The time represented the interval which elapsed between the transmission of the British ultimatum to Germany and the hour set for the German reply. The place was that same historic room in the Foreign Office where so many interviews had already taken place and where so many

were to take place in the next four years. As Page came in, Sir Edward, a tall and worn and rather pallid figure, was standing against the mantelpiece; he greeted the Ambassador with a grave handshake and the two men sat down. Overwrought the Foreign Secretary may have been, after the racking week which had just passed, but there was nothing flurried or excited in his manner; his whole bearing was calm and dignified, his speech was quiet and restrained, he uttered not one bitter word against Germany, but his measured accents had a sureness, a conviction of the justice of his cause, that went home in almost deadly fashion. He sat in a characteristic pose, his elbows resting on the sides of his chair, his hands folded and placed beneath his chin, the whole body leaning forward eagerly and his eyes searching those of his American friend.

Sir Edward at once referred to the German invasion of Belgium.

"The neutrality of Belgium," he said, and there was the touch of finality in his voice, "is assured by treaty. Germany is a signatory power to that treaty. It is upon such solemn compacts as this that civilisation rests. If we give them up or permit them to be violated, what becomes of civilisa-

tion? Ordered society differs from mere force only by such solemn agreements or compacts. But Germany has violated the neutrality of Belgium. That means bad faith. It means also the end of Belgium's independence. And it will not end with Belgium. Next will come Holland, and, after Holland, Denmark. This very morning the Swedish Minister informed me that Germany had made overtures to Sweden to come in on Germany's side. The whole plan is thus clear. This one great military power means to annex Belgium, Holland, and the Scandinavian States and to subjugate France."

"England would be forever contemptible," Sir Edward said, "if it should sit by and see this treaty violated. Its position would be gone if Germany were thus permitted to dominate Europe. I have therefore asked you to come to tell you that this morning we sent an ultimatum to Germany. We have told Germany that, if this assault on Belgium's neutrality is not reversed, England will declare war."

"Do you expect Germany to accept it?" asked the Ambassador.

Sir Edward shook his head.

"No. Of course everybody knows that there will be war."

There was a moment's pause and then the Foreign Secretary spoke again:—

"Yet we must remember that there are two Germanys. There is the Germany of men like ourselves—of men like Lichnowsky and Jagow. Then there is the Germany of men of the war party. The war party has got the upper hand."

At this point Sir Edward's eyes filled with tears.

"Thus the efforts of a lifetime go for nothing. I feel like a man who has wasted his life."

Sir Edward then asked the Ambassador to explain the situation to President Wilson; he expressed the hope that the United States would take an attitude of neutrality and that Great Britain might look for "the courtesies of neutrality" from this country. Page tried to tell him of the sincere pain that such a war would cause the President and the American people.

"I came away," the Ambassador afterwards said, "with a sort of stunned sense of the impending ruin of half the world." *

* "Life and Letters of W. H. Page," Vol. I, p. 313.

CHAPTER XXVIII

AT WAR

AT midnight on Tuesday, August 4th, Great Britain and Germany were at war.

The order for the mobilisation of the British Army had been given on Monday the 3rd. There were some of us who still hoped against hope that a clear and public declaration of our conception of our obligations might, even then, arrest a great international crime. Hence Sir Edward Grey's historic speech in the House of Commons on Monday, August 3rd, from which I have already quoted, and which was followed by our ultimatum to Germany, requiring her to give us an assurance by midnight the following day, that the neutrality of Belgium would be respected.

The evidence of national unity in accepting the arbitrament of war, the mere thought of which only a week before would have been scouted by millions of our fellow-countrymen as a wild imagination, was unmistakable. Already on Sunday the Unionist leaders had proffered their co-operation. Even

more significant was the response made in the House of Commons on Monday by Mr. Redmond on behalf of the Irish Nationalists. Germany had undoubtedly counted that, in any event, Great Britain would be kept back from active participation in the European struggle by the imminence of Civil War in Ireland. As it was, it may almost be said that the two rival Irish parties vied with one another in fervid and active support of the policy of the British Government.

For this unification and consolidation of opinion in every part of the United Kingdom, the German Government, or in other words the dominant military clique in Berlin, had only themselves to thank. They had deliberately outraged, by one and the same act, two deep-seated sentiments, which alike in Great Britain and in Ireland, are always alive and ready to show themselves alert: the sense of the sanctity of treaty obligations; and the feeling that it is impossible for people of our blood and history to be content to stand by, and help to keep a ring, while a big bully sets to work to thrash and trample to the ground a victim, who has given him no provocation, and who is his equal in everything but size and physical strength.

It is to be remembered that a somewhat similar situation had arisen, after the publication on the 25th July, 1870, of the secret Benedetti "project" of 1867, of which one of the proposed stipulations was that Prussia should not object to the incorporation of Belgium by France. The British Government took prompt action which can be best described in Lord Morley's words: *

"On July 30, they (the Cabinet) met and took a decision to which Mr. Gladstone then and always after attached high importance. England proposed a treaty to Prussia and France, providing that if the armies of either violated the neutrality of Belgium, Great Britain would co-operate with the others for its defence, but without engaging to take part in the general operations of the war. The treaty was to hold good for twelve months after the conclusion of the War. Bismarck at once came into the engagement. France loitered a while, but after the battle of Worth made no more difficulty, and the instrument was signed on August 9th."

Lord Morley proceeds to quote from a letter addressed by Mr. Gladstone to Mr. Bright, who was

* "Life of Gladstone," Vol. II, p. 341.

uneasy at our undertaking an engagement which might involve us in the use of force. "The publication of the treaty . . . has thrown upon us the necessity either of doing something fresh to secure Belgium or else of saying that under no circumstances would we take any step to secure her from absorption. The publication has wholly altered the feeling of the House of Commons, and no government could at this moment venture to give utterance to such an intention about Belgium. But neither do we think it would be right, even if it were safe, to announce that we would in any case stand by with folded arms, and see actions done which would amount to a total extinction of public right in Europe." He adds in a later letter: "If the Belgian people desire on their own account to join France or any other country, I for one will be no party to taking up arms to prevent it. But that the Belgians, whether they would or not, should go 'plump' down the maw of another country to satisfy dynastic greed is another matter."

The two cases are not identical in their circumstances, but they are governed by the same principle. Nor, apart from the question of treaty obligations, can there be any doubt into whose "maw"

Belgium would have been absorbed if we had not joined with France in withstanding German designs.

The Cabinet, though in the course of the negotiations it may have differed as to the relative importance of particular points, was till the last moment absolutely and I might almost say passionately united in its desire for the preservation of peace. For a whole week it had sat almost continuously, exploring eagerly and patiently every avenue which seemed to offer a possible way of escape from the worst of all calamities—a general European War. No one knew so well as its members how, in a long succession of critical and hazardous situations, Sir Edward Grey had trodden, without losing head or foot-hold, the narrow path between two abysses: like one of those "duck-boards" by which later on our soldiers used to find their way across the craters and morasses dug out by shell and mine in Flanders and Northern France. The news which came on Sunday of the imminent invasion of Belgium and of King Albert's appeal to our own King compelled a decision.

Two of my colleagues felt it their duty to resign, and my most insistent appeals failed to alter their

determination. The one was Lord Morley, the doyen of the Cabinet, the only remaining personal link that bound us to the heroic age of the "men that strove with gods." He had been from the beginning of my political life my Mentor. Between 1885 and 1892 callow Liberals of that day—Grey, Haldane, Arthur Acland, S. Buxton, Tom Ellis and myself—used to meet periodically at his board, where he reasoned with us not only (like St. Paul) "of righteousness and temperance and judgment to come," but of all the things that it is useful for mettlesome and aspiring politicians to learn. I am not by any means certain that he thinks that all his pupils have done credit to his teaching. For myself I can truly say that as time went on, and we were exposed during long years to all the testing ordeals of colleague-ship, though (in Carlyle's words) "in opinion not always agreeing," I became more and more closely attached to him by the ties of personal affection and gratitude. I felt, as did all his colleagues, that his severance from our counsels left a gap that no one else could fill.

The other member of the Cabinet who could not be persuaded to remain with us was Mr. John Burns: a man of rare gifts and even rarer per-

sonality; always a staunch and loyal comrade, and one "to go out with in all weathers."

I append to this chapter their letters of resignation.

It was impossible for me when war was once declared any longer to combine the duties of the War Office with those of Prime Minister. Lord Kitchener who had just concluded his annual visit to England had taken the train for Dover on his return journey to Egypt and was, I believe, almost in the act of boarding the Channel steamer, when he received a telegram from me asking him to come back to London. I had talked over the matter with Lord Haldane, who agreed with me that it was of the highest importance to persuade Kitchener to accept the seals of the War Office. He had a high and indeed world-wide reputation both as a soldier, organiser, administrator and man of business. The legend that his nomination was forced upon a resourceless and ever reluctant Government by the prescience and urgency of a noisy section of the Press is, I need hardly say, a baseless and silly figment. It was with much difficulty, and only after I had pressed it upon him as a matter of duty, that I induced him to assent to my proposal. It

was not till after the Great War Council which I summoned for Wednesday the 5th, at which all our Naval and Military experts were present—including Lord Roberts and Lord Kitchener himself—that he was installed as head of the War Office. I have given elsewhere my estimate of his gifts and services.

As it is not within the scope of this book to deal with the prosecution and conduct of the War, I am brought here to an end of my narrative.

Privy Council Office,
Whitehall, S. W.
August 3rd, 1914.

My dear Asquith,

I have—as you wished—taken a night's reflection over my retirement. I have given earnest pains to reach a sensible conclusion.

One thing is clear. Nothing can be so fatal in present circumstances as a Cabinet with divided counsels. Grey has pointed out the essential difference between two views of Neutrality in our present case. Well, I deplore the fact that I incline one way, and the three of my leading colleagues incline the other way. This being so, I could contribute

nothing useful to your deliberations, and my presence would only hamper the concentrated energy—the zealous and convinced accord—that are indispensable.

You remember the Peelites joining the Palmerston Cabinet in the Crimean War. They entered it and resigned in two or three days. So if we abandon Neutrality, I fear that vital points might arise within two or three days, that would make my presence a tiresome nuisance.

I press you therefore to release me. I propose to come to the Cabinet to-day after the P. C. at the Palace. But I dare not hope to be much affected by what will pass there.

You will believe that I write this with heartfelt pain.

Ever,

M.

Board of Trade,
Whitehall Gardens, S. W.
August 2nd, 1914.

Dear Mr. Asquith,

The decision of the Cabinet to intervene in an European War is an act with which I profoundly disagree.

I therefore place in your hands my resignation of my office as President of Board of Trade.

With deep respect, cordial sympathy, and best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

JOHN BURNS.

CHAPTER XXIX

ALIGNMENT OF THE STATES: THE DOMINIONS

WHEN the War broke out the actual belligerents were on the one side the three members of the Entente and Belgium and on the other the two Central Powers. It was not long before each side received accessions of strength.

It is possible that if Great Britain had refused to go in, Japan would also have abstained. Russia and France were no parties to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, nor were they bound to Japan, or she to them by any special engagements. She had in any case grievances of her own against Germany, and was not reluctant to take her stand on the side of the Allies. As early as the 15th August she demanded the surrender of Tsing Tao, the oversea base the acquisition of which had been the earliest adventure of the *Weltpolitik,* and upon the development and equipment of which Germany must have spent not far short of 20 millions sterling. With the aid of a British contingent from Wei-hai-

weh, the Japanese began to invest the position, and it was surrendered early in November.

The relations of Greece to the Allies, in the first stage of the War, have been a good deal misunderstood, and it may be well to put on record the real facts.

During the month of August, 1914, M. Venizelos offered to place at the disposal of the Entente all the military and naval resources of Greece. It is not clear what was the extent and nature of his authority in making the offer: whether it was an official proposal put forward with the approval of the King and Cabinet, or whether it was a personal overture, to which in the commanding position he then occupied, he felt little doubt of his capacity to give effect.

The attitude to be adopted toward Greece was the subject of discussion among the Allies. The view taken by the British Government, which was apparently shared both by France and Russia, was that the separate entry of Greece into the War was not at that moment expedient. It would, in Sir Edward Grey's judgment, have almost certainly have had the result of provoking Turkey and Bul-

garia, who were both still neutral, into joining the Central Powers.

Such an adjustment of the weights would obviously have tilted the balance against the Allies in the Near East.

In regard to Bulgaria, it is to be noted that at this time M. Venizelos, with the full approval of Sir Edward Grey, was devoting his energies to the establishment of a Balkan Federation. It was in our view essential to avoid the recrudescence of inter-Balkan animosities, and the possible outbreak of a Balkan War, with all its contingent and incalculable military obligations.

In regard to Turkey, the objections to a Greek entry into the War at that stage were even stronger. Relations between the two countries were in July-August, 1914, for a number of reasons in a state of extreme tension, and the acceptance by the Allies of the Greek offer would almost certainly have brought them at once to the breaking point. No one, indeed, on the side of the Allies, who had any knowledge of what had been going on in Turkey under the régime of Germanisation, could believe in the possibility of her permanent neutrality. But every week's delay, before she took her prob-

ably inevitable decision to side actively with the Central Powers, was of the utmost military importance. Her first aggressive operation would almost certainly be an attack on the Suez Canal. The situation in France was such that not a man could be spared from that front. Some weeks must elapse before Indian troops could be made available in Egypt; still longer before the Dominion contingents could cross the seas. It was not (as the event showed) until after the first battle of Ypres, and the stabilisation of the Western front, that any plan could be formed for detaching troops to the East. Further, it was essential to the position of Great Britain in Asia, with her millions of Mahomedan subjects, that if and when Turkey joined our enemies in the War, it should be clear that it was the deliberate and unprovoked act of the Ottoman Government. Acceptance on our part of the Greek offer at that time would have given the Turks a welcome and much needed justification.

The policy which commended itself to Sir Edward Grey was that Greece should be advised to reserve herself so long as Turkey did not intervene.

At what precise moment the Turks would join

the fighting forces of the Central Powers was only a question of weeks, but it was not till late in October that, encouraged by the lucky escape of the *Goeben* and *Breslau* and their safe arrival at the Golden Horn, the Ottoman Government became openly hostile. On the 1st November the British Ambassador left Constantinople.

Of the Balkan States, Bulgaria and Rumania hung back, the one for a year, the other for two years.

Italy had from the first declined to treat the aggressive enterprise of her two partners in the Triple Alliance as a casus foederis; apart from other reasons, she could not have done so without a direct breach of the agreement made between her and France in 1902, but it was only after some months (May, 1915) that she declared war upon Austria (though not upon Germany) and took the field on the side of the Entente.

Meanwhile the most important and most welcome factor from the point of view of the Allies was the spontaneous and enthusiastic rally to their cause of the British Dominions and India.

It will be appropriate at this place, though it goes in some respects beyond the range of my book,

to present a summarised statement in figures, of the extent of their effort, not only at the outset of the War, but down to its conclusion.

I. The following gives in round figures the strengths of the contingents from the larger Dominions in the more important war theatres.

(1) *Canada.*

(The Canadians served in France only.)
First contingent 20,000 men, February, 1915.
The number rose to 37,000—August, 1915.
74,000—June, 1916.
160,000—August, 1918.
From January, 1918, to the Armistice, the Canadians were about 10 per cent of the British in France.

(2) *Australia and New Zealand.*

(Served first in Egypt and Dardanelles.)
20,000 to 30,000 men served in Dardanelles, April, 1915-January, 1916.
From August, 1916, to Armistice about 20,000 served in Egypt and Palestine.

In April, 1916, strength in France 40,000. August, 1916, strength in France 100,000. Numbers rose to 150,000 (January, 1917) and the average numbers in France during last 2 years of war were 130,000. Of all these, New Zealand troops were about 25 per cent. Maximum numbers in France were about 10 per cent of the British strength.

(3) *South Africa.*

About 50,000 men served in German S. W. Africa.

6,000 men served in France from August, 1916, to the Armistice.

Varying numbers, averaging 7,000 served in East Africa.

(4) *India (Native Troops).*

FRANCE.

25,000 men in France December, 1914. Numbers rose to 40,000 by August, 1915; fell to 10,000 by March, 1916, at which figure they remained till Armistice.

MEDITERRANEAN AND SALONICA.

(Early figures not given.)

25,000 men in May, 1916; numbers fell to 8,000 in January, 1917, and rose steadily to 120,000 at the Armistice. At this figure they *were 40 per cent of the* British strength.

MESOPOTAMIA.

60,000 men in June, 1916; numbers rose to 150,000 in January, 1918, and were 120,000 at the Armistice (British strength then about 100,000).

EAST AFRICA.

From May, 1916, the number fluctuated around 14,000—about the same as the number of British.

II. Total Numbers sent Overseas.

By end of	Canada	Australia	N. Z.	So. Africa	Newfoundland
1916	270,000	250,000	56,000	11,000	2,800
1917	340,000	300,000	89,000	66,000	4,000
1918	420,000	324,000	100,000	74,000	5,500
Recruited for Overseas service at Armistice.					
	37,000	8,000	11,000	2,000	600

III. Percentage of total White male population recruited during the war—

U. K. and Ireland	22.1. (Ireland 6.14)
Canada	13.48
Australia	13.43
N. Zealand	19.35
S. Africa	11.12

(No figures for India.)

Speaking in the House of Commons in May, 1916, I estimated that the Military contribution already made under voluntary recruiting by the United Kingdom, the Dominions, and India was not less than 5,000,000 men.

Of the Naval efforts of the Dominions (up to the end of 1914) I am enabled by the courtesy of the Admiralty to give the following particulars:

Canada

The main operations in Canadian waters can be conveniently divided into those on the Pacific Coast and those on the Atlantic Coast. At the outbreak of war H. M. C. S. *Rainbow* was stationed at Esquimault. She had been prepared for sea with a view to undertaking the Behring Sea Patrol and

in view of the threatening aspect of international affairs during the last week in July, had been instructed to prepare for sea in all respects and hold herself ready to proceed. She was placed at the disposition of the Admiralty and sailed on the 2nd of August to protect British shipping in the Pacific and render such assistance as might be necessary to the two British sloops of war, the *Algerine* and *Shear-water,* which were stationed in Mexican waters and which were in great danger owing to the presence there of the two German cruisers, *Leipzig* and *Nuremberg.* The German cruisers, though outranging the British vessels in gun power and speed, were content to play a safe game, and evidently did not relish the prospect of a combat so far from their base. Though the *Rainbow* kept to sea and proceeded southward as far as San Francisco, she was not interfered with nor could she come into touch with either enemy vessel, though they were in the vicinity at the time. The two small sloops also reached Esquimault in safety without seeing the enemy craft.

The purchase of the two Chilean submarines in Seattle was consummated and delivery obtained in Canadian waters some hours before the declaration

of war and crews recruited from retired Naval Officers and men resident in Canada. They performed patrol duty on the approaches to Victoria and Vancouver, and no doubt had a deterrent effect on the enemy activities off the coast. This small squadron was reinforced in September by the arrival of H. M. S. *Newcastle* from Hong Kong, and still later by the presence of other vessels of the Royal Navy and also of the Imperial Japanese Navy.

The German warships withdrew from the North Pacific waters without making their presence felt by active operations of any nature and joined Admiral von Spee's squadron, coming from Kiao Chiao, in the South Pacific, and finally met their doom at or shortly after the battle of the Falkland Islands in December, 1914.

On the Altantic Coast H. M. C. S. *Niobe* was not in full commission at the outbreak of war, she having been used solely for depot and training purposes for some years. She was immediately placed at the disposal of the Admiralty. No effort was spared to fit her for sea and obtain trained officers and men to complete her complement. Men from the Imperial ships on the Pacific and from the

R. N. R. in Newfoundland, with many volunteers and old service ratings from all over Canada, were available, and a full crew with the necessary experience was easily obtained. She was ready for sea in September, 1914, and at once proceeded to take her place on the Atlantic patrol with other cruisers of the Royal Navy of similar class.

Shortly after the outbreak of war the Russian Government purchased the icebreaker *Earl Grey* from the Canadian Government, to operate in the White Sea and assist in keeping their vital ports open as long as possible. She was prepared for sea, stored, and manned by a Naval crew at Halifax, and proceeded to Archangel, the crew returning to England and Canada later.

Work of the Australian Naval Forces

At the outbreak of war the Commonwealth Government placed their Navy under the control of the Admiralty.

In the early days of the war the ships of the Australian Navy were employed in the operations entailed by the presence of the German Squadron in the Pacific, in the occupation of German New Guinea, New Pomerania, Samoa, and islands in

the Pacific, in escorting transports conveying New Zealand troops to Samoa, and Australian and New Zealand troops to England during the period that the *Emden* was operating in the Indian Ocean, and which was terminated by her destruction by H. M. A. S. *Sydney,* at the Cocos Islands.

Subsequently the *Australia, Melbourne,* and *Sydney* joined the Grand Fleet, and the *Brisbane* the Fleet in the Mediterranean, the *Melbourne* and *Sydney* having been previously employed for some time in North America and the West Indies.

The *Pioneer* did good service on the East Coast of Africa in connection with the operations against the *Königsberg.*

Submarine A.E. 1. was accidentally lost off the Coast of New Britain (late New Pomerania). (Presumed date, 19th September, 1914.)

New Zealand

New Zealand bore the cost of the Battle-cruiser *New Zealand* which served in the Grand Fleet throughout the War, and also provided ratings for manning the *Philomel* and *Pyramus,* while 91 R. N. V. R. Officers and over 160 ratings were

sent home for service in the Fleet and Auxiliary Patrol Service.

A Naval and Military Expeditionary Force from New Zealand, escorted by H. M. and H. M. A. Ships, occupied Samoa.

The Work of the Navy in South Africa

The Officers and men of the South African Division R. N. V. R. were employed on various services on shore, assisting in transport work, and in the crews of H. M. Ships, as crews of guns mounted on shore, assisting in Transport work, and in the dockyard at Simonstown.

During the operations in South-West Africa, which were conducted entirely by the Union Government, the transport service in connection with the expedition was also administered by them, though the escorting of the troop transports was carried out by the vessels of the Royal Navy.

Newfoundland

A contribution of 1,500 men from the Naval Reserve was made for service in the Fleet and in the Auxiliary Patrol Service on the coasts of Great

Britain, and in conjunction with Canada a Patrol Service was established.

(N.I.D./18.1.23.)

RH.

India

On the outbreak of war several ships of the Royal Indian Marine were commissioned by the Royal Navy.

Amongst the largest are: *Dalhousie, Dufferin, Lawrence, Minto,* which were employed chiefly in the Persian Gulf. Others were employed trooping and on various services connected with the War.

About a third of the officers held temporary commissions in the Royal Navy (and some in the Army), in addition to several retired officers who also held temporary commissions in the Navy. Several officers were employed as "Transport Officers" in the various theatres of war.

CHAPTER XXX

THE KAISER

Part I: A Character Sketch

THE ex-Kaiser's recently published book—"My Memoirs, 1878-1918"—is not a serious contribution to history. It abounds—like his previous compilation—"Comparative History 1878-1914," published in Leipzig, December, 1921—in obvious and indeed glaring misstatements of fact, and is disfigured throughout by overweening egotism, and an utterly distorted perspective. Whatever in his narrative has the semblance of novelty—as, for instance, his ascription of the real though remote origin of the War to the so-called "Gentleman's agreement" of 1897 between France, Great Britain and the United States only illustrates the readiness of a credulous and prejudiced judgment to accept gossip for evidence and rumour for proof. The German case (such as it is) is much more plausibly presented in the flamboyant periods of

Prince Bülow, and even in the unconvincing apologetics of Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg.

But the book, though of no value to the historical student, and though in the main both flimsy in substance and discursive in style, has a value of its own in the light which it throws upon an interesting and complex personality.

William II, if he had been born in a private station, had natural endowments which might have carried him far. His danger, even then, would have been a restless versatility both of mind and character, and a lack of the power and the will to concentrate, which in the long run makes the difference between the amateur and the expert. If he had been forced by wise training, by self-discipline, or by the rigour of circumstances, to choose and to adhere to a definite channel of activity, practical or intellectual, and to throw all his powers into its pursuit, he could hardly have failed to play a useful, perhaps a brilliant, part on any stage of contemporary life. But fortune, which seemed to be so lavish in its favours, denied him these restraining and constraining influences, and allowed him free play for all the indulgences of wayward ambition and an uncontrolled temperament. His

very gifts, in the environment by which he was encircled (to quote a once famous line of a now forgotten Victorian poet), came to nothing more than

"A zig-zag streak of lightning in the brain."

The premature and tragic death of his father, the Emperor Frederick, the most blameless and liberal-minded figure in the annals of the Hohenzollern dynasty, placed him, when he was barely 30, on a dazzling height of irresponsible power. His grandfather, through the agency of Bismarck and Moltke, had secured for the old Kingdom of Prussia the Imperial Crown of a new and united Germany. The secular enemy, France, had been crushed and mutilated, and was for the time at any rate put out of action. The Hapsburg Monarchy was no longer a danger; it had become, indeed, a docile if not a subservient friend. With Russia it had been, from first to last, Bismarck's persistent policy to prevent the possibility of serious quarrel. England sat remote in her sea-girt isolation, almost (it seemed) as far aloof as the United States of America from the sphere of Continental politics. Never in modern times had a young ruler succeeded to so splendid and seemingly so secure an inheritance.

At first, and indeed for a long time, all appeared to go well. Even the dismissal of the Great Chancellor, the architect of this wonderful fabric, was accepted with acquiescence, and in the more progressive sections of German opinion, with a sigh of grateful relief. The new Kaiser, with his devotion, which never failed or flagged, to the cares and labours of his office, his many-sided interests, his insatiable curiosity, his ceaseless itineraries, his demagogic turn for rhetoric of the picturesque and "Asiatic" type, his unshakable faith in the Divine mission of the Hohenzollerns and the future of the Fatherland, soon became the most interesting, and the best advertised, figure in the Continental world.

This was a situation, so dizzy in its altitudes, actual and potential, and so intoxicating in its atmosphere, that it might well have turned any but an exceptionally steady head. A still more giddy eminence proved too much even for Napoleon, and William II was not a Napoleon, nor even a Frederick the Great. To a man of his up-bringing and temperament, the allurements were fatal; he lost, and never afterwards recovered, his balance.

To what a degree of spiritual inebriety he became capable of sinking, is shown by his notorious out-

burst at Königsberg, one of the Holy Places of the Hohenzollerns, in August, 1910.

"Here my grandfather, by his own right hand, placed on his head the Royal Crown of Prussia, once more declaring that it was bestowed upon him by God's grace alone, and not by Parliaments, national assemblies, or the popular voice: so that he regarded himself as the chosen instrument of Heaven, and as such he performed his duties as ruler. Looking upon myself as the instrument of the Lord, regardless of the views and opinions of the hour I shall go my way." This sad stuff, at once ludicrous and nauseating, came from the lips, not of a callow youth, but of a man of fifty, who had sat more than twenty years on his throne.

Delirant reges, plectuntur Achivi. The famous line of Horace tells only half the truth. What is to be said of the psychology of the Kaiser's subjects—not an ignorant and backward tribe, just emerging from the superstitions of barbarism or the yoke of serfdom, but in many directions among the intellectual pioneers of Europe who, after passing through the stage of a somewhat sloppy and misty idealism, had, in face of enormous difficulties, achieved political unity, and were showing them-

selves every year capable of holding their own, and more than their own, in all the practical activities—industrial, maritime, financial—of the competitive modern world? How came such a people to place their fortunes, during the life-time of a whole generation at the mercy of the moods and whims, the gestures and phrases, of such a ruler? It might almost be said of him, during the greater part of his reign, as it was of David: "Whatsoever the King did pleased all the people" (2 Sam. III. 36).

The evidence is overwhelming that he was rarely allowed to see or know the truth—either about himself, or about his environment. A shrewd observer, the Austrian Count Czernin, happened to meet him at almost the only time in his reign when he was for the moment genuinely and almost universally unpopular, at any rate in Berlin. It was in the autumn of 1908, in the hubbub created by the *Daily Telegraph* interview, when he had been publicly humiliated in the Reichstag by his Chancellor, Prince Bülow. "I felt," says Count Czernin, "that in William II I saw a man who, for the first time in his life, with horror-stricken eyes, looked upon the world as it really was. He saw brutal reality in close proximity. For the first time in his

life, perhaps, he felt his position on his throne to be a little insecure. He forgot his lesson too quickly. Had the German people often treated the German Emperor as they did then it might have cured him." In another passage, speaking of the Emperor's entourage, and singling out Ludendorff as the only man among them who preserved and never compromised his independence, he goes on: "The numerous burgomasters, town councillors, professors of the Universities, deputies—in short men of the people and men of science—had for years prostrated themselves before the Emperor William; a word from him intoxicated them." The "Byzantine atmosphere," in which he lived would "have killed the hardest plant." . . . "it enveloped him and clung to him like a creeper to a tree." And in the end "he succumbed to the fatal lot that awaits men who feel the earth recede from under their feet, and who begin to believe in their Divine Semblance."

CHAPTER XXXI

THE KAISER

Part II: His War Preparation Charges Analysed

THERE has been, as is natural, exaggeration and distortion in the current conceptions of the Kaiser. To some of the caricaturists he is nothing but a villain; to others he is little better than a vapid rhetorician. Human psychology rarely admits of such crude simplifications. His book of Memoirs, thin and often trivial as it is, could not have been written either by a knave or a fool. It discloses a strange medley both of faults and faculties.

I have had occasion more than once in the preceding pages to give instances of his almost inconceivable credulity. One might almost say that if he wished to believe a thing, he believed it; it ought to be true, and he has no concern with the rules of evidence which affect the judgment of common people.

In his chapter on the "Outbreak of the War," he has compiled a catalogue of no less than twelve "important proofs" that the Entente countries had, already in the spring and summer of 1914, not only contemplated but began to organise an attack upon Germany. It is impossible to deal seriously with such a collection of trivialities, but I will select from them two—the only two—which are cited as proofs of England's complicity in this nefarious conspiracy.

The first is that as far back as April, 1914, "the accumulation of gold reserves was commenced by the English Banks." "Germany on the other hand was as late as July still exporting gold—to the Entente countries among others."

What are the real facts?

In regard to the English Banks there had been for some years—certainly from the time when I was Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1907-8—a movement in the direction of increasing their holdings of gold. The subject was one on which there was a good deal of diversity of opinion in the City. I have asked the Chairman of one of our greatest London Banks, whose experience goes back for a number of years, whether anything was done in the

spring of 1914 to justify the Kaiser's allegation. He has been good enough to send me the following statement, which I reproduce with immaterial omissions:

"It is true that the amount of gold which the English Banks should hold in reserve had been a matter of constant discussion for some months before July. An eminent Bank Chairman had been urging the policy of increasing the amount, and had largely added to the holding of his own bank. My own bank did not altogether favour the policy: but there was an agreement come to that we should somewhat augment our gold holdings, and we accordingly did so. This of course had no relation whatever to any anticipation of War: it was merely part of discussions which were going on with regard to the whole policy of the Bank Act and the gold reserves of the country."

In reference to the alleged German export of gold, my correspondent writes:

"We were told at the time of the crisis in 1911 that the Kaiser had sent for the Bankers, and asked if they were ready for War. They said that they were not. 'Never let me have that answer again' was his reply. Whether this is true or not, it is certain that from that time the Reichsbank began piling up enormous reserves of gold. By 1914 the process was complete."

The matter is one of considerable historical interest, and by the courtesy of the Governor of the

Bank of England I am enabled to publish the following instructive tables:

GERMANY

IMPORTS AND EXPORTS OF GOLD

Gold Marks converted at 20 to £.

000's omitted.

1913	*Imports*			*Exports*		
	Mks.			*Mks.*		
January	20,630			17,076		
February	9,514			6,985		
March	37,932			1,908		
April	21,955			2,371		
May	25,295			3,184		
June	79,200	194,526	£9,726	2,412	33,936	£1,697
July	19,746			8,383		
August	17,260			9,896		
September	75,653			2,367		
October	30,148			2,033		
November	23,967			2,163		
December	15,172	181,946	£9,097	2,254	27,096	£1,355
		376,472	£18,823		61,032	£3,052

1914						
	Mks.			*Mks.*		
January	13,031			1,987		
February	9,401			4,282		
March	23,478			4,311		
April	21,879			1,614		
May	10,487	78,276		4,472	16,666	
		78,276	£3,914 *		16,666	£833

* The British Customs House Returns shew that £4,865 m was exported to Germany from the United Kingdom during the period January to May, 1914. It must be presumed, therefore, that the German figures are *net* imports, i.e., Imports less Re-Exports.

The above figures are taken from the monthly Trade Returns prepared by the German Imperial Statistical Office.

GOLD EXPORTS FROM UNITED KINGDOM

000's omitted.

	1913			
	Total (Bullion and Coin)		*Of which to Germany*	
January	5,320		1,059	
February	3,633		72	
March	2,222		865	
April	2,056		716	
May	1,635		46	
June	3,961	18,827	2,695	5,453
July	2,246		1,152	
August	3,125		162	
September	6,319		1,394	
October	10,294		1,497	
November	3,633		227	
December	2,221	27,838	473	4,905
		£46,665		£10,358

GOLD EXPORTS FROM UNITED KINGDOM

000' omitted.

	1914 1st half-year		
	Total	*Of which to Germany*	
January	1,068	188	
February	5,620	877	
March	3,434	1,542	
April	4,817	1,280	
May	5,251	978	
June	2,175	438	
	22,365	5,303	
Total for 2nd half-year	8,232	278	(July)
	£30,597	£5,581	

GOLD IMPORTS: UNITED KINGDOM

000's omitted.

	1913			
	Total		*Of which Germany*	
January	4,993		13	
February	3,620		36	
March	4,248		24	
April	5,671		51	
May	4,261		40	
June	3,948	26,741	29	193
July	6,777		56	
August	7,597		47	
September	4,780		20	
October	5,215		8	
November	4,741		5	
December	4,945	34,055	13	149
		£60,796		£342

GOLD IMPORTS: UNITED KINGDOM

000's omitted.

	1914			
	Total		*Of which Germany*	
January	4,893		17	
February	4,341		2	
March	3,623		1	
April	4,923		15	
May	5,130		28	
June	6,023	28,933	40	103
July	6,555		25	
August	12,142		8	
September	790		—	
October	941		—	
November	704		—	
December	580	21,712	—	33
		£50,645		£136

These figures speak for themselves.

The other piece of evidence against England is

equally curious "When our (i.e. the German) troops advanced in 1914 they found in Northern France and along the Belgian frontier great stores of English soldiers' great coats. According to statements by the inhabitants, they were placed there during the *last years of peace.*"

"It was the same with regard to maps. In Maubeuge great quantities of English military maps of Northern France and Belgium were found by our men. . . . These maps date from 1911 and were engraved at Southampton."

"The stores" (i.e. both of great coats and maps) "were established by England with the permission of the French and Belgian Governments *before* the War, in the midst of peace."

As soon as I read this singular story, I sent the substance of it to one of our most distinguished Generals, who took a prominent part both in the preparations for, and the actual transport of the Expeditionary Force, and asked him to favour me with his observations. I quote the material parts of his reply:

"The first ship-load of military stores of any kind reached Havre on August 9th (1914) and consisted neither of great-coats nor maps. If we had been free to

dump stores in North East France, I cannot conceive of any soldier giving precedence to these two articles. Ammunition and foodstuffs would obviously have been of vastly greater importance. In the conversations that had taken place before the War between the two general staffs, Havre had been allotted to us as our main base, in the event of our deciding to send an expeditionary force to France. After the outbreak of War, discussions were held as late as August 12th as to our place of concentration, and almost at the last moment, there was a complete change of plan, in consequence of the transfer of French troops from the Lorraine front to the North. The weather at the end of August was abnormally hot, and numbers of our men, wearied by the long day and night marches threw away their great-coats, which were mostly new and issued on mobilisation. Probably here and there they were picked up by French peasants."

No more, I think, need be said.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE KAISER

Part III: His Claims to Scholarship

THE really interesting passages in the Kaiser's Memoirs are those in which he deals with his relations in Science, Art, Scholarship, and Theology. His account, in the Chapter headed "The Pope and Peace," of the dialogue between himself and the Papal Nuncio at Kreuznach during the War in the summer of 1917, in which he drew a sharp contrast between the ardour of the Socialist efforts for Peace and the lukewarmness and lethargy of the "Viceroy of Christ,"—whether it is accurate or not, and I understand that it is repudiated by the Vatican as a travesty of what actually took place—is at any rate excellent reading. He dwells with much complacency upon his patronage of Harnack, whom, in defiance of the opposition of the "orthodox," he installed in Berlin;* of

* "What benefit, what knowledge, has intercourse with this fiery intellect brought to me!" (Memoirs, p. 194.)

Schiemann, in whom he found a congenial and well-instructed "champion of the Germanic idea against Slavic arrogance"; "this unshakable capacity for keeping his mouth shut justified my trust in him"; and of Delitzsch, whose famous lecture "Babel and Bible" "fell upon the ears of a public as yet too ignorant and unprepared, and led too many misrepresentations in Church circles," which the Kaiser, himself an enthusiast in Assyriology, "strove hard to clear up." This description of the method to which he resorted for achieving his purpose is so characteristic that it deserves to be quoted: "I arranged that my trusted friend and brilliant theatre director, Count Hülsen-Waesener, should produce the play "Assurbanipfal" after long preparation under the auspices of the German Oriental Society. Assyriologists of all countries were invited to the dress rehearsal; in the boxes commingled indiscriminately were Professors, Protestant and Catholic clergymen, Jews and Christians. Many expressed to me their thanks for having shown by the performance, how far research work had already progressed, and for having at the same time revealed more clearly to the general public the importance of Assyriology."

He was moved to issue (February, 1903) a rescript—*urbi et orbi*—in which he expounds at length his own views of Revelation, and concludes with a general Confession of Faith. Some passages from this singular document—whatever may be their intrinsic value—throw an interesting light on the Kaiser's psychology:

"(God) follows the development of the human race with a father's love and interest, for the purpose of leading it forward and benefiting it He reveals himself in some great servant, or priest, or King—be they heathens, Jews or Christians. Hammurabi was one of these; likewise Moses, Abraham, Charlemagne, Luther, Shakespeare, Goethe, Kant, Emperor William the Great. . . . How often did my grandfather clearly emphasise that he was but an instrument in the hand of the Lord!

"My view therefore is that our good Professor should rather avoid introducing and treating of religion as such . . . but that he may continue unhindered to describe whatever brings the religion, customs, etc., of the Babylonians, etc., into relation with the Old Testament."

Such was the prescription of the Potsdam Vatican.

He carried with him into these harmless, and in some cases useful, activities, the *naif* self-confidence which never failed him in the more perilous ventures of *Weltpolitik*.

It has been the good fortune of the Hohenzollern dynasty that from time to time its head, whether by accident or by insight, has been able to find servants of rare and conspicuous capacity.

Such were Stein and Hardenberg, who when, after Jena, Prussia had reached her lowest depth of impotence and humiliation, may be said to have re-created her national existence, and trained and equipped her for her great future. Fifty years later King William, a prince of no exceptional natural endowments (though classed, as we have seen by this grandson, with Moses and Shakespeare) found in Bismarck, Moltke and Roon men who secured for her the hegemony of a United Germany. William II, with all his gifts, seems to have been wholly lacking in the ancestral *flair*. His grandfather was an obstinate and narrow-minded man, and at times, and in certain moods, by no means easy even for a Bismarck to handle. But he cared little or nothing either for the applause or the hisses of the gallery. The more unpopular a Minister became (as was the case with Bismarck in the early Sixties) the more staunchly he stuck to him. And he had his reward. But the grandson was (with rare exceptions) neither happy in his choice of men,

nor constant to those whom he had chosen. Now and again he allowed an independent outsider like Ballin, to gain his fitful confidence, but the evidence is clear that, absorbed by the consciousness of his Heaven-sent mission and of his own special justification for its discharge, he surrounded himself more and more, as time went on, with an impenetrable bodyguard of deceivers and flatterers.

And this continued to the end. Ballin, who saw him for the last time at Wilhemshöhe on the 5th September, 1918, on the verge of the final catastrophe, writes in his diary:

"I found the Kaiser very misinformed, as usual. . . . The facts have been twisted to such an extent that even the serious failure of our offensive—which at first had depressed him very much—has been described to him as a success . . . its only result has been the loss of several hundreds of thousands of valuable lives. All this, as I have said, is dished up to the poor Kaiser in such a fashion that he remains perfectly blind to its catastrophic effect."

This book does not deal with the conduct of the War, and I therefore abstain from any comment upon the Kaiser's version of the Naval and Military operations. But it would not be generous or fair

to bring to a close the estimate of him which I have attempted in these chapters without referring to the account which he gives of his abdication and self-expatriation.

This final resolve was, he tells us, largely due to the counsels of Field Marshal von Hindenberg: "He advised me to leave the army and go to some neutral country for the purpose of avoiding Civil War." There is a note of pathetic sincerity in the description which follows of the mental and emotional fluctuations through which he passed before coming to a decision.

"I went," he says, "through a fearful mental struggle. On the one hand, I as a soldier was outraged at the idea of abandoning my still faithful, brave troops. On the other hand, there was the declarations of our foes that they were unwilling to conclude with me any peace endurable to Germany, as well as the statement of my own Government, that only by my departure for foreign parts was Civil War to be prevented. . . . I consciously sacrificed myself, and my throne, in the belief that by so doing I was best serving the interests of my beloved Fatherland. The sacrifice was in vain. My

departure brought us neither better armistice conditions nor better peace terms, nor did it prevent Civil War."

He discusses one after another the alternatives which were open to him, and gives his reasons for rejecting them all. What were they? (1) "To go with some regiment to the front, hurl himself with it upon the enemy, and seek death in some last attack." This, he points out, would have delayed and perhaps prevented the armistice, already in course of negotiation and meant the "useless sacrifice of the lives of many soldiers." (2) "To return home at the head of the Army." "But a peaceful return was no longer possible; the rebels had already seized the Rhine bridges and other important points in the rear of the army. Certainly I could have forced my way back at the head of loyal troops, taken from the fighting front, but by so doing I should have put the finishing touch to Germany's collapse" . . . "Civil war would have ensued."

(3) "Others say that the Emperor should have killed himself. That was made impossible by my firm Christian beliefs: and would not people have

exclaimed 'How cowardly, now he shirks all responsibility by committing suicide'?"

So he determined to act on Hindenberg's advice.

I confess myself unable either to quarrel with his reasoning, or to question his conclusion.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

FRANCO-RUSSIAN CONVENTION

(The following is the text of the Franco-Russian Convention of 1892-93. It was, M. Poincaré says, preserved at the Quai d'Orsay in an envelope on which President Félix Faure had, some time afterwards, written the following brief annotation: "The military Convention is accepted by the letter of M. de Giers to M. de Montebello, giving the force of a treaty to this Convention.")

1. If France is attacked by Germany, or by Italy supported by Germany, Russia will employ all her available forces for the purpose of attacking Germany.

If Russia is attacked by Germany or by Austria supported by Germany, France will employ all her available forces for the purpose of combating Germany.

2. In the event of the mobilisation of the forces of the Triple Alliance, or of one of the Powers which are parties to it, France and Russia, at the first announcement of that event, and without the need of any preliminary agreement, will immediately and simultaneously mobilise the whole of their forces and advance them to the nearest possible point of their frontiers.

3. The available forces that ought to be employed against Germany are, on the part of France 1,300,000 men, on the part of Russia 700,000 to 800,000 men. These forces will be fully engaged, with all diligence, in such a manner that Germany will have to fight at the same time on the East and on the West.

4. The General Staffs of the two countries will always work in concert for the purpose of preparing and facilitating the carrying out of the measures set forth above. They will communicate to each other, in time of peace, all information relating to the armies of the Triple Alliance that shall come to their knowledge. The ways and means of correspondence in time of war will be studied and provided for in advance.

5. France and Russia shall not conclude peace separately.

6. The present Convention shall have the same duration as the Triple Alliance.

7. All the clauses enumerated above shall be kept rigorously secret.

"This Convention," M. Poincaré explains, "formed, until the month of August, 1914, the law in regard to French relations with Russia. One single clause was modified in August, 1899, by agreement between the Emperor and President Loubet, by an exchange of letters between Count Mouravieff and M. Delcassé. The two Governments feared that the Convention, having the same duration as the Triple Alliance, might lapse if the Triple Alliance were dissolved by the death of the Austrian Emperor and the dismemberment of Austria, and they deemed it prudent to arrange that it should remain in force, like the preparatory diplomatic accord passed in 1891, as long as the common interests of the two countries demanded it."

"Finally" (adds M. Poincaré) "very soon after I took direction of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, I received from our ambassador at St. Petersburg, M. Georges Louis, the following telegram:

St. Petersburg,
February 6, 1912.

"The Minister of Marine told me this evening that he was authorised to inform me officially that the Emperor would

regard with satisfaction the establishment, between the General Staffs of the French Navy and the Russian Navy, of direct relations similar to those that have existed since 1892 between the General Staffs of the armies of the two countries. The Admiral made this communication to me in very warm terms. He added that M. Sazonoff would repeat them to me formally.

"The Government over which I presided was unanimous in deciding that these overtures must not be repulsed. Although the Russian fleet had not then again become very powerful, it was evidently of interest that the two fleets should not be entirely ignorant of each other. The draft of a Naval Convention, establishing permanent and regular contact between the two navies, was signed on July 16, 1912, and when I went to St. Petersburg in the following month M. Sazonoff and I exchanged letters of ratification."

APPENDIX B

ANGLO-FRENCH AGREEMENTS

Agreements between Great Britain and France were signed in London by the Marquess of Lansdowne and M. Paul Cambon on April 8, 1904. The Marquess of Lansdowne in a despatch to His Majesty's Ambassador at Paris forwarding the Agreements wrote:

"I have from time to time kept your Excellency fully informed of the progress of my negotiations with the French Ambassador for the complete settlement of a series of important questions in which the interests of Great Britain and France are involved. These negotiations commenced in the spring of last year, and have been continued with but slight interruptions up to the present time.

"Such a settlement was notoriously desired on both sides of the Channel, and the movement in its favour received a powerful impulse from the visit paid to France by His Majesty King Edward VII in May last and by the return visit of President Loubet to this country. Upon the latter occasion, the President was accompanied by the distinguished Statesman who has so long presided over the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is a matter for congratulation that his presence afforded to His Majesty's Government the great advantage of a full and frank exchange of ideas. It left us in no doubt that a settlement of the kind which both Governments desired, and one which would be mutually advantageous to both countries, was within our reach."

APPENDIX

DECLARATION RESPECTING EGYPT AND MOROCCO

The following are the terms of the declaration respecting Egypt and Morocco:—

Article I.

HIS Britannic Majesty's Government declare that they have no intention of altering the political status of Egypt.

The Government of the French Republic, for their part, declare that they will not obstruct the action of Great Britain in that country by asking that a limit of time be fixed for the British occupation or in any other manner, and that they give their assent to the draft Khedivial Decree annexed to the present Arrangement, containing the guarantees considered necessary for the protection of the interests of the Egyptian bondholders, on the condition that, after its promulgation, it cannot be modified in any way without the consent of the Powers Signatory of the Convention of London of 1885.

It is agreed that the post of Director-General of Antiquities in Egypt shall continue, as in the past, to be entrusted to a French *savant*.

The French schools in Egypt shall continue to enjoy the same liberty as in the past.

Article II.

The Government of the French Republic declare that they have no intention of altering the political status of Morocco.

His Britannic Majesty's Government, for their part, recognise that it appertains to France, more particularly as a Power whose dominions are conterminous for a great distance with those of Morocco, to preserve order in that country, and to provide assistance for the purpose of all administrative, economic, financial, and military reforms which it may require.

They declare that they will not obstruct the action taken by France for this purpose, provided that such action shall leave intact the rights which Great Britain, in virtue of Treaties, Conventions, and usage, enjoys in Morocco, including the right of coasting trade between the ports of Morocco, enjoyed by British vessels since 1901.

Article III.

His Britannic Majesty's Government, for their part will respect the rights which France, in virtue of Treaties, Conventions, and usage, enjoys in Egypt, including the right of coasting trade between Egyptian ports accorded to French vessels.

Article IV.

The two Governments, being equally attached to the principle of commercial liberty both in Egypt and Morocco, declare that they will not, in those countries, countenance any inequality either in the imposition of customs duties or other taxes, or of railway transport charges.

The trade of both nations with Morocco and with Egypt shall enjoy the same treatment in transit through the French and British possessions in Africa. An Agreement between the two Governments shall settle the conditions of such transit and shall determine the points of entry.

This mutual engagement shall be binding for a period of thirty years. Unless this stipulation is expressly denounced at least one year in advance, the period shall be extended for five years at a time.

Nevertheless, the Government of the French Republic reserve to themselves in Morocco, and His Britannic Majesty's Government reserve to themselves in Egypt, the right to see that the concessions for roads, railways, ports, etc., are only granted on such conditions as will maintain intact the au-

thority of the State over these great undertakings of public interest.

Article V.

His Britannic Majesty's Government declare that they will use their influence in order that the French officials now in the Egyptian service may not be placed under conditions less advantageous than those applying to the British officials in the same service.

The Government of the French Republic, for their part, would make no objection to the application of analogous conditions to British officials now in the Moorish service.

Article VI.

In order to insure the free passage of the Suez Canal, His Britannic Majesty's Government declare that they adhere to the stipulations of the Treaty of the 29th October, 1888, and that they agree to their being put in force. The free passage of the Canal being thus guaranteed, the execution of the last sentence of paragraph 1 as well as of paragraph 2 of Article VIII of that Treaty will remain in abeyance.

Article VII.

In order to secure the free passage of the Straits of Gibraltar, the two Governments agree not to permit the erection of any fortifications on strategic works on that portion of the coast of Morocco comprised between, but not including, Melilla and the heights which command the right bank of the River Sebou.

This condition, does not, however, apply to the places at present in the occupation of Spain on the Moorish coast of the Mediterranean.

Article VIII.

The two Governments, inspired by their feeling of sincere friendship for Spain, take into special consideration the in-

terests which that country derives from her geographical position and from her territorial possessions on the Moorish coast of the Mediterranean. In regard to these interests the French Government will come to an understanding with the Spanish Government.

The agreement which may be come to on the subject between France and Spain shall be communicated to His Britannic Majesty's Government.

Article IX.

The two Governments agree to afford to one another their diplomatic support, in order to obtain the execution of the clauses of the present Declaration regarding Egypt and Morocco.

(There were also a number of subsidiary deductions in regard to the boundaries and interests of the countries in and about Siam, Gambia, Nigeria, Zanzibar, Madagascar and the New Hebrides.)

After giving an account of these, Lord Lansdowne's despatch proceeds:

"It is important to regard them not merely as a series of separate transactions, but as forming part of a comprehensive scheme for the improvement of the international relations of two great countries.

"From this point of view their cumulative effect can scarcely fail to be advantageous in a very high degree. They remove the sources of long-standing differences, the existence of which has been a chronic addition to our diplomatic embarrassments and a standing menace to an international friendship which we have been at much pains to cultivate, and which, we rejoice to think, has completely overshadowed the antipathies and suspicions of the past."

APPENDIX C

ANGLO-RUSSIAN CONVENTION, 1907

A Convention between the United Kingdom and Russia relating to Persia, Afghanistan and Thibet, was signed at St. Petersburg on August 31, 1907.

It began:—

"His Majesty the King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, Emperor of India, and His Majesty the Emperor of All the Russias, animated by the sincere desire to settle by mutual agreement different questions concerning the interests of their States on the Continent of Asia, have determined to conclude Agreements destined to prevent all cause of misunderstanding between Great Britain and Russia in regard to the questions referred to."

The following are the articles of The Convention:—

AGREEMENT CONCERNING PERSIA

The Governments of Great Britain and Russia having mutually engaged to respect the integrity and independence of Persia, and sincerely desiring the preservation of order throughout that country and its peaceful development, as well as the permanent establishment of equal advantages for the trade and industry of all other nations;

Considering that each of them has, for geographical and economic reasons, a special interest in the maintenance of

peace and order in certain provinces of Persia adjoining, or in the neighbourhood of, the Russian frontier on the one hand, and the frontiers of Afghanistan and Baluchistan on the other hand; and being desirous of avoiding all cause of conflict between their respective interests in the above-mentioned provinces of Persia;

Have agreed on the following terms:—

I. Great Britain engages not to seek for herself, and not to support in favour of British subjects, or in favour of the subjects of third Powers, any Concessions of a political or commercial nature—such as Concessions for railways, banks, telegraphs, roads, transport, insurance, etc.,—beyond a line starting from Kasr-i-Shirin, passing through Ispahan, Yezd, Kakhk, and ending at a point on the Persian frontier at the intersection of the Russian and Afghan frontiers, and not to oppose, directly or indirectly, demands for similar Concessions in this region which are supported by the Russian Government. It is understood that the above-mentioned places are included in the region in which Great Britain engages not to seek the Concessions referred to.

II. Russia, on her part, engages not to seek for herself and not to support, in favour of Russian subjects, or in favour of the subjects of third Powers, any Concessions of a political or commercial nature—such as Concessions for railways, banks, telegraphs, roads, transport, insurance, etc.,—beyond a line going from the Afghan frontier by way of Gazik, Birjand, Kerman, and ending at Bunder Abbas, and not to oppose, directly or indirectly, demands for similar Concessions in this region which are supported by the British Government. It is understood that the above-mentioned places are included in the region in which Russia engages not to seek the Concessions referred to.

III. Russia, on her part, engages not to oppose, without previous arrangement with Great Britain, the grant of any Concessions whatever to British subjects in the regions of Persia situated between the lines mentioned in Articles I and II.

Great Britain undertakes a similar engagement as regards the grant of Concessions to Russian subjects in the same regions of Persia.

All Concessions existing at present in the regions indicated in Articles I and II are maintained.

IV. It is understood that the revenues of all the Persian customs, with the exception of those of Farsistan and of the Persian Gulf, revenues guaranteeing the amortisation and the interest of the loans concluded by the Government of the Shah with the "Banque d'Escompte et des Prêts de Perse," up to the date of the signature of the present Agreement, shall be devoted to the same purpose as in the past.

It is equally understood that the revenues of the Persian customs of Farsistan and of the Persian Gulf, as well as those of the fisheries on the Persian shore of the Caspian Sea and those of the Posts and Telegraphs, shall be devoted, as in the past, to the service of the loans concluded by the Government of the Shah with the Imperial Bank of Persia up to the date of the signature of the present Agreement.

V. In the event of irregularities occurring in the amortisation or the payment of the interest of the Persian loans concluded with the "Banque d'Escompte et des Prêts de Perse" and with the Imperial Bank of Persia up to the date of the signature of the present Agreement, and in the event of the necessity arising for Russia to establish control over the sources of revenue guaranteeing the regular service of the loans concluded with the first-named bank, and situated in the region mentioned in Article II of the present Agreement, or

for Great Britain to establish control over the sources of revenue guaranteeing the regular service of the loans concluded with the second-named bank, and situated in the region mentioned in Article I of the present Agreement, the British and Russian Governments undertake to enter beforehand into a friendly exchange of ideas with a view to determine, in agreement with each other, the measures of control in question and to avoid all interference which would not be in conformity with the principles governing the present Agreement.

CONVENTION CONCERNING AFGHANISTAN

The High Contracting Parties, in order to ensure perfect security on their respective frontiers in Central Asia and to maintain in these regions a solid and lasting peace, have concluded the following Convention:—

Article I.

His Britannic Majesty's Government declare that they have no intention of changing the political status of Afghanistan.

His Britannic Majesty's Government further engage to exercise their influence in Afghanistan only in a pacific sense, and they will not themselves take, nor encourage Afghanistan to take, any measures threatening Russia.

The Russian Government, on their part, declare that they recognise Afghanistan as outside the sphere of Russian influence, and they engage that all their political relations with Afghanistan shall be conducted through the intermediary of His Britannic Majesty's Government; they further engage not to send any Agents into Afghanistan.

Article II.

The Government of His Britannic Majesty having declared in the Treaty signed at Kabul on the 21st March, 1905, that

they recognise the Agreement and the engagements concluded with the late Ameer Abdur Rahman, and that they have no intention of interfering in the internal government of Afghan territory, Great Britain engages neither to annex nor to occupy in contravention of that Treaty any portion of Afghanistan or to interfere in the internal administration of the country, provided that the Ameer fulfils the engagements already contracted by him towards His Britannic Majesty's Government under the above-mentioned Treaty.

Article III.

The Russian and Afghan authorities, specially designated for the purpose on the frontier or in the frontier provinces, may establish relations with each other for the settlement of local questions of a non-political character.

Article IV.

His Britannic Majesty's Government and the Russian Government affirm their adherence to the principle of equality of commercial opportunity in Afghanistan, and they agree that any facilities which may have been, or shall be hereafter, obtained for British and British-Indian trade and traders, shall be equally enjoyed by Russian trade and traders. Should the progress of trade establish the necessity for Commercial Agents, the two Governments will agree as to what measures shall be taken, due regard, of course, being had to the Ameer's sovereign rights.

Article V.

The present arrangements will only come into force when His Britannic Majesty's Government shall have notified to the Russian Government the consent of the Ameer to the terms stipulated above.

AGREEMENT CONCERNING THIBET

The Governments of Great Britain and Russia recognising the suzerain rights of China in Thibet, and considering the fact that Great Britain, by reason of her geographical position, has a special interest in the maintenance of the *status quo* in the external relations of Thibet, have made the following Agreement:—

Article I.

The two High Contracting Parties engage to respect the territorial integrity of Thibet and to abstain from all interference in its internal administration.

Article II.

In conformity with the admitted principle of the suzerainty of China over Thibet, Great Britain and Russia engage not to enter into negotiations with Thibet except through the intermediary of the Chinese Government. This engagement does not exclude the direct relations between British Commercial Agents and the Thibetan authorities provided for in Article V of the Convention between Great Britain and Thibet of the 7th September, 1904, and confirmed by the Convention between Great Britain and China of the 27th April, 1906; nor does it modify the engagements entered into by Great Britain and China in Article I of the said Convention of 1906.

It is clearly understood that Buddhists, subjects of Great Britain or of Russia, may enter into direct relations on strictly religious matters with the Dalai Lama and the other representatives of Buddhism in Thibet; the Governments of Great Britain and Russia engage, so far as they are concerned, not to allow those relations to infringe the stipulations of the present Agreement.

Article III.

The British and Russian Governments respectively engage not to send Representatives to Lhassa.

Article IV.

The two High Contracting Parties engage neither to seek nor to obtain, whether for themselves or their subjects, any Concessions for railways, roads, telegraphs, and mines, or other rights in Thibet.

Article V.

The two Governments agree that no part of the revenues of Thibet, whether in kind or in cash, shall be pledged or assigned to Great Britain or Russia or to any of their subjects.

APPENDIX D

GREY-CAMBON FORMULA, 1912

Sir Edward Grey to M. Cambon,
French Ambassador in London.
Foreign Office, November 22, 1912.

My dear Ambassador,

From time to time in recent years the French and British naval and military experts have consulted together. It has always been understood that such consultation does not restrict the freedom of either Government to decide at any future time whether or not to assist the other by armed force. We have agreed that consultation between experts is not, and ought not to be regarded as, an engagement that commits either Government to action in a contingency that has not arisen and may never arise. The disposition, for instance, of the French and British fleets respectively at the present moment is not based upon an engagement to co-operate in war.

You have, however, pointed out that, if either Government had grave reason to expect an unprovoked attack by a third Power, it might become essential to know whether it could in that event depend upon the armed assistance of the other.

I agree that, if either Government had grave reason to expect an unprovoked attack by a third Power, or something that threatened the general peace, it should immediately discuss with the other whether both Governments should act together to prevent aggression and to preserve peace, and, if so, what measures they would be prepared to take in common.

If these measures involved action, the plans of the General Staffs would at once be taken into consideration, and the Governments would then decide what effect should be given to them.

Yours, &c.,

E. GREY.

M. Cambon to Sir Edward Grey,
(Translation)

French Embassy, London.
November 23, 1912.

Dear Sir Edward,

You reminded me in your letter of yesterday, 22nd November, that during the last few years the military and naval authorities of France and Great Britain had consulted with each other from time to time; that it had always been understood that these consultations should not restrict the liberty of either Government to decide in the future whether they should lend each other the support of their armed forces; that, on either side, these consultations between experts were not and should not be considered as engagements binding our Governments to take action in certain eventualities; that, however, I had remarked to you that, if one or other of the two Governments had grave reasons to fear an unprovoked attack on the part of a third Power, it would become essential to know whether it could count on the armed support of the other.

Your letter answers that point, and I am authorised to state that, in the event of one of our two Governments having grave reasons to fear either an act of aggression from a third Power, or some event threatening the general peace, that Government would immediately examine with the other the question whether both Governments should act together in order to prevent the act of aggression or preserve peace. If so, the two

Governments would deliberate as to the measures which they would be prepared to take in common; if those measures involved action, the two Governments would take into immediate consideration the plans of their General Staffs and would then decide as to the effect to be given to those plans.

Yours, &c.,

PAUL CAMBON.

APPENDIX E

THE HAGUE CONFERENCE AND THE LIMITATION OF ARMAMENTS

By the Prime Minister.

(Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman.)

(In *The Nation,* March 2, 1907.)

The disposition shown by certain Powers, of whom Great Britain is one, to raise the question of the limitation of armaments at the approaching Hague Conference, has evoked some objections both at home and abroad, on the ground that such action would be ill-timed, inconvenient, and mischievous. I wish to indicate, as briefly as may be, my reasons for holding these objections to be baseless.

It should be borne in mind that the original Conference at the Hague was convened for the purpose of raising this very question, and in the hope that the Powers might arrive at an understanding calculated to afford some measure of relief from an excessive and ever-increasing burden. The hope was not fulfilled, nor was it to be expected that agreement on so delicate and complex a matter would be reached at the first attempt; but, on the other hand, I have never heard it suggested that the discussion left behind it any injurious consequences. I submit that it is the business of those who are opposed to the renewal of the attempt, to show that some special and essential change of circumstances has arisen, such as to render unnecessary, inopportune, or positively mis-

chievous, a course adopted with general approbation in 1898.

Nothing of the kind, has, so far as I know, been attempted, and I doubt if it could be undertaken with any hope of success. It was desirable in 1898, to lighten the burden of armaments; but that consummation is not less desirable to-day, when the weight of the burden has been enormously increased. In 1898 it was already perceived that the endless multiplication of the engines of war was futile and self-defeating; and the years that have passed have only served to strengthen and intensify that impression. In regard to the struggle for sea power, it was suspected that no limits could be set to the competition, save by a process of economic exhaustion, since the natural checks imposed on military power by frontiers, and considerations of population, have no counterpart upon the seas; and again, we find that the suspicion has grown to something like a certainty to-day.

On the other hand, I am aware of no special circumstances which would make the submission of this question to the Conference a matter of International misgiving. It would surprise me to hear it alleged that the interests of the Powers in any respect impose on them a divergence of standpoint so absolute and irreconcilable that the mere discussion of the limitation of armaments would be fraught with danger. Here, again, it seems to me that we do well to fortify ourselves from recent experience. Since the first Hague Conference was held, the points of disagreement between the Powers have become not more, but less acute; they are confined to a far smaller field; the sentiment in favour of peace, so far as can be judged, has become incomparably stronger and more constant; and the idea of arbitration and the peaceful adjustment of International disputes has attained a practical potency, and a moral authority undreamt of in 1898. These are considerations as to which the least that can be said is that they should

be allowed their due weight; and in face of them, I suggest that only upon one hypothesis can the submission of this grave matter to the Conference be set down as inadmissible: namely, that guarantees of peace, be they what they may, are to be treated as having no practical bearing on the scale and intensity of warlike preparations.

That would be a lame and impotent conclusion, calculated to undermine the moral position of the Conference, and to stultify its proceedings in the eye of the world. It would amount to a declaration that the common interest of peace, proclaimed for the first time by the community of nations assembled at the Hague, and carried forward since then by successive stages, with a rapidity beyond the dreams of the most sanguine, has been confided to the guardianship of the Admiralties and the War Offices of the Powers.

Let me in conclusion say a word as to the part of Great Britain. We have already given earnest of our sincerity by the considerable reductions that have been effected in our naval and military expenditure, as well as by the undertaking that we are prepared to go further, if we find a similar disposition in other quarters. Our delegates, therefore, will not go into the Conference empty-handed. It has, however, been suggested that our example will count for nothing, because our preponderant naval position will still remain unimpaired. I do not believe it. The sea power of this country implies no challenge to any single State or group of States. I am persuaded that throughout the world that power is recognised as non-aggressive, and innocent of designs against the independence, the commercial freedom, and the legitimate development of other States, and that it is, therefore, a mistake to imagine that the naval Powers will be disposed to regard our position on the sea as a bar to any proposal for the arrest of armaments, or to the

calling of a temporary truce. The truth appears to me to lie in the opposite direction. Our known adhesion to those two dominent principles—the independence of nationalities and the freedom of trade—entitles us of itself to claim that if our fleets be invulnerable, they carry with them no menace across the waters of the world, but a message of the most cordial goodwill, based on a belief in the community of interests between the nations.

APPENDIX F

WAR IN BALKANS: STATEMENT BY SIR E. GREY IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

The *Secretary* of *State* for *Foreign Affairs* (Sir Edward Grey): There is some information which I should like to give to the House with regard to Foreign Affairs, which I think the House certainly ought to have before it separates, and on which it is necessary for me to make some explanation. As the House is aware, there has been ever since last December continuing in London meetings of the five Ambassadors of the Great Powers and myself, discussing certain points connected with the difficulties in the Balkans. The announcement I have to make is that those meetings are now adjourned for the holidays. But I should like it to be clearly understood that the fact that what have been called the meetings of the Ambassadors had adjourned for a considerable time is no ground whatever for drawing any ill-omened inference as regards the relations of the Great Powers to each other. For some time the meetings of the Ambassadors have been regarded as the symbol of the existence of the Concert of Europe, but we have happily reached the stage at which I trust the Concert of Europe is so firmly established that the mere fact of the meetings of the Ambassadors being adjourned for the holidays will raise no doubts as regards the health and well-being of the Concert of the Great Powers of Europe. On the contrary, I think everyone who considers how startling, distressing, and sudden have been the events of the last few weeks

in the Balkan Peninsula, and then at the same time recalls the fact that during these last few weeks there has been no talk of a *casus foederis* arising among the different sets of Allies of the Great Powers, that there have been no rumours of mobilisation on the part of any of the Great Powers, and no alarming reports of tension between any of the Great Powers—all that there was in the earlier stages of this Balkan trouble—anyone who remembers that within the last few weeks we have had such startling and surprising events, and yet that there have been none of those rumours as to the intentions of the Great Powers which we had in the earlier stages, I think will be convinced that at the present moment the relations between the Great Powers are not in a condition which threatens the peace of Europe or give rise for apprehension.

It is true, of course, that there has not been unanimity between the Great Powers. Anyone who reads the Continental Press will see that there is not unanimity on all points. The opinions expressed in the different countries on the merits of the different points of the Treaty of Bucharest differ, but there are no differences of opinion which show a tendency to divide the different groups of the Great Powers into opposing camps.

I would like people to realise what it is that the meetings of the Ambassadors were called into existence to do. It has been an axiom of diplomacy for many a year past that if ever war broke out in the Balkans it would be impossible, or almost impossible, to prevent one or more of the Great Powers being dragged into the conflict. Suddenly, last October, we were confronted with that situation which had been regarded as so threatening and ominous to the peace of Europe, and the peace of the Great Powers themselves. Up to the time of the outbreak of that war in October there had

been universal expectation that if war took place in the Balkans, the Great Powers, or some of the Great Powers, would be unable to keep out of it, and that, if one or more was brought in, it was impossible to say how many others would be brought in. I ought to say that the Great Powers at once set to work to see if they could not disappoint that gloomy expectation by localising the conflict, at all events, in the Balkans. They saw at once the necessity of keeping in touch with each other with that object. The ordinary method of diplomatic communication by which the Great Powers keep in touch with each other is that of telegrams between the different Capitals.

That is a machinery which in the case of six Great Powers requires for its working six Foreign Ministers and thirty Ambassadors—a personnel of thirty-six in all—necessarily a very cumbrous and slow-moving machine, and the meetings of Ambassadors in London were called into existence then as an emergency expedient by which, through a simpler machinery, than the ordinary diplomatic methods, the Great Powers might keep more constantly and more quickly in touch with regard to each difficulty as it arose. The object was to localise the war, and we found after surveying the ground that if Constantinople and Asiatic Turkey were not to be brought within the area of the war, and if these questions were not to be raised in the course of the war, then the Great Powers might find themselves in agreement, provided they came to an understanding with each other about Albanian and the Ægean Islands. For that purpose we set to work to come to an understanding on these two points, taking Albania and the Ægean Islands as a matter of discussion between the Great Powers, on which it was essential to them to reach an Agreement, if they were to keep in touch and friendship with each other, and to localise the war, and in

this sense that with regard to the rest, provided Constantinople and Asiatic Turkey and the Straits were not touched, the rest could be fought out among the combatants themselves without interference.

That was not the only difficulty that was referred to the Ambassadors in the course of the last few months. As other questions arose they were from time to time brought up for discussion between the Ambassadors, because I think I may claim for that meeting that it became in a short time trusted by all the Powers, to this extent: that it was regarded as an eminently safe place at which to raise questions for discussion, and that if we could not settle things we did not, at any rate, make anything worse which was brought before us. But our main work was to secure agreement between the Great Powers by dealing with the question of Albania, and in the question of Albania I include that of commercial access to Serbia, to the Adriatic and the Ægean Islands. We have at last, after discussing many tedious details, reached an agreement which covers Albania and the Ægean Islands. I will not go into any details about what the actual agreement is. Roughly it is this, that an international commission of control is to be established with regard to Albania, with a *gendarmerie* under officers selected from one of the smaller neutral Powers, the object being to set up an autonomous State, eventually under a Prince selected by the Great Powers. The difficulty of coming to an agreement about particular frontiers has been very great. Everyone will remember how difficult and how critical at some points were the questions raised in connection with the settlement of the north and north-eastern frontiers of Albania. They were settled some time ago. We have now come to an agreement for the delimitation under certain agreed conditions of the southern and south-eastern frontiers of Albania, which will complete the

whole frontiers of this State. I am quite aware that when the whole comes to be stated it will be open on many points to a great deal of criticism from anyone with a local knowledge who looks at it purely on the merits of the locality itself. It is to be borne in mind that in making that agreement the primary essential was to preserve agreement between the Great Powers themselves, and if the agreement about Albania has secured that it has done the work which is most essential in the interests of the peace of Europe.

Then there has been the question about the Ægean Islands. There are three points to be borne in mind about the Ægean Islands. In the first place, the bulk of the nationality of these islands is Greek. But there are other considerations than that to be borne in mind. Some of the islands have most important strategic positions; some of them command the entrance to the Straits; and the control of the entrance to the Straits, is a matter, of course, vitally affecting Turkey and vitally affecting Powers which have a particular interest in seeing that the Straits are kept open. Besides that, some of the islands are exceedingly close to the coast of Asiatic Turkey, and if, as we trust, in future the Turkish authorities with improved government and sound finance are to continue to preserve the integrity of the Turkish Dominions in Asiatic Turkey, then it is essential that none of these islands should be used as a base from which disturbance may be created on the mainland in Asiatic Turkey. All those considerations have to be borne in mind. With regard to the greater part of this scheme we have not felt that British interests—I speak now of the whole of the Albanian and the Ægean Islands question—were so directly concerned as to make it necessary for us to take the leading part in initiating what the decision should be, but with regard to the Ægean Islands there is one point on which we do feel that, owing to our position in the

Mediterranean and to naval considerations, we have a particular interest, and it is this: that no one of these islands should be claimed or retained by one of the Great Powers. If one of these islands passes into the permanent possession of a Great Power it must raise questions of great importance and great difficulty. The Great Powers themselves feel this and at the beginning of the Conference passed a self-denying ordinance in this sense, that to preserve union amongst them they would none of them take advantage of the conflict still proceeding in the Balkans to claim territory for themselves. We have had a special interest to see that that should hold good with regard to the Ægean Islands and that interest remains. The Ægean Islands have been complicated by the fact that there is a special Treaty of Lausanne between Italy and Turkey, of a date prior to this outbreak, under which Italy is in possession temporarily of certain of these islands until Turkey has fulfilled the provisions of the Treaty of Lausanne and withdrawn all Turkish officers and troops from Cyrenaica. The provision of the Treaty of Lausanne has not yet been fulfilled on the part of Turkey and Italy remains in occupation of those particular islands.

That Treaty is, of course, a matter between Italy and Turkey which the Great Powers would not naturally take into consideration but they were forced by this war in the Balkans to consider the question of these islands and they could not consider the question of the islands except as a whole. The agreement we have really come to is this. The destiny of these Ægean Islands—all of them including those in the temporary occupation of Italy—is a matter which concerns all the Great Powers, and must be settled eventually by them and no Great Power is to retain one of these islands for itself. Until the provisions of the Treaty of Lausanne between Italy and Turkey are completely fulfilled, of course,

the final settlement as regards these particular islands in Italian occupation cannot be made, and naturally, the question may arise of what is to happen supposing the fulfilment on the part of Turkey of the Treaty of Lausanne with regard to Cyrenaica is indefinitely postponed and the Italian occupation of these islands is therefore indefinitely prolonged. Italy has never allowed us for one moment to doubt that it is her intention to complete that part of that Treaty with regard to these islands and retire from these islands when Turkey has completed her part. We have complete confidence in her good faith. Indeed it would be entirely wrong to suggest for a moment that there was any doubt of her good faith in the matter. We have complete confidence in that. We know that she is pressing Turkey and is anxious to get Turkey to fulfil her part of the Treaty, and therefore the question of what will happen if that is indefinitely delayed is one which need not occupy us at the present moment. The great thing is that the principle should be laid down that the destiny of the Ægean Islands is one which concerns all the Powers, and that no one Great Power can claim one of those islands for itself.

I want to say to the House something on the situation of the moment. There are two most serious and difficult questions which the events of the last few weeks have made it necessary for the Powers to consider. There is the effectual settlement of Thrace and the settlement of Macedonia; in other words, the two great questions occupying the minds of the Powers at the present moment, and which must occupy them for some time to come, are the Turkish reoccupation of Thrace and the division of Macedonia under the Treaty of Bucharest. I will take the question of Thrace first. The Turkish Government has disregarded the Treaty which was drawn up in London under the auspices of the Powers, and, as the Prime Minister

has said, when the ink was scarcely dry, they disregarded the line fixed by that Treaty, and have reoccupied Thrace and Adrianople. That was a Treaty to which the Great Powers were not actual parties, but which was made under their auspices.

Then there was another agreement made under the auspices of the Great Powers, an agreement between Rumania and Bulgaria, which was made at St. Petersburg. That also has been disregarded. More distressing than any of these events, or at least as distressing, has been the fact that, as the Prime Minister said in the same speech, Macedonia has been drenched with blood by war between those who were lately allies, joined in an alliance cemented by bloodshed in a common cause, and who have in the last few weeks turned upon each other and been engaged in a war between themselves, accompanied by most terrible circumstances.

The real danger to Turkey is not from external attack, but from internal disorders and internal weaknesses.

I believe it would be a most disastrous mistake if Turkey in this matter did not take the advice of the Powers. I should like to go a little further on this point, and the point of our relations with Mahomedan Powers generally, and to say this: No Minister of the Crown can speak on these matters without remembering that the King has many millions of Mahomedan subjects. What responsibility does that entail? I wish there to be a clear understanding as to what that responsibility is. For one thing, and one thing only, have we absolute and entire responsibility, and that is for seeing that inside the British Dominions the racial sentiments and religious feelings of these Mahomedan subjects are respected and have full scope. That is the only thing for which we have complete and entire responsibility. That duty we will fulfil, and we do fulfil absolutely. I think we may go further, and

rightly claim that in deference to the susceptibilities of any great section of subjects of the Crown our policy should never be one of intolerance or wanton or unprovoked aggression against a Mussulman Power. That, I think, we are entitled to claim. But we cannot undertake the duty of protecting Mussulman Powers outside the British Dominions from the consequences of their own action.

I am afraid the Concert of Europe is not very sensitive to criticism. Lord Salisbury compared it once to a steam-roller, and a steam-roller never gives one the impression of being very sensitive to criticism. But it ought to be borne in mind that the Concert of Europe set itself to one object, and that was, to localise the war, and on the whole, I think, the Concert of Europe has been wise in setting itself that object and not going beyond that object. To attempt more might have been to endanger the whole Concert. It is easy enough to talk about the great strength of the European Powers, and how they could make their will respected if they chose to do so. Of course, they could do what is possible by naval demonstration when such things are likely to be of use, but if the Powers were to have intervened effectively in recent events, they would have had to use troops; they would have had to land those troops and march them to shoot at the risk of being shot. In your own country's quarrels you do these things, but it is exceedingly difficult to get the Powers of Europe, or any of them, to vote money and to use its troops in any cause except one which it feels the interests of its own country absolutely requires.

The amount of good that any one country can do in promoting the peace of Europe, depends very largely upon the credit which it has for good intentions. If it has credit for good intentions, it may say a great deal, and if it has not that credit, even the wisest and most carefully guarded words may

do more harm than good. I do gratefully acknowledge in all criticisms which I have seen upon the action of the British Government, or utterances made on behalf of the British Government, we have had in other countries during this crisis, credit for being animated by good intentions. That credit, I trust, we may continue to deserve, and the House may be assured that if there is a question of British interests being directly affected, or this country being committed to engagements, we will take the House into our confidence, and the House may rest assured we will continue to work as closely as possible with other Powers in the interests of common peace, which is our great object to secure.

THE END

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